

Philippians: God's Glory

A Commentary

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PHILIPPIANS

Introduction

New Testament Testimony

Philippians

There are three words in this letter which not only contain but also convey a central truth concerning the letter's pleasant and powerful orientation: *chara* ("joy, gladness") – 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1 . . . *chario* ("rejoice") – 1:18 [twice]; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10 . . . *sugchairō* ("rejoice with") – 2:17, 18. Barclay says it may, therefore, be called "*The Epistle of Joy*" (8). Scott maintains it is "the most intimate of his epistles" (5).

Acts

Acts has been called Luke's "travel diary" (Scott, 4) and significantly so in relation to Paul's journeys into Europe. In fact, Acts 16 records some of the details about the time Paul himself spent in the city of Philippi¹ – "a Roman colony, the leading town in that part of Macedonia" (16:12-40). His stay there seems to have revolved around three people: 2 women and 1 man (apparently): Lydia (16:14-15, 40) – a slave-girl (16:16-18) – a jailer (16:19-39).

There was no synagogue in this city due to the limited number of Jews. However, a God-fearer by the name of Lydia and her family responded positively to the gospel and her home became the residence of Paul and the meeting place for the brethren. Upon release from prison, it was to her house that they returned for refreshment before departing S, SW to Thessalonica.

The slave-girl was merely a tool in the hands of the terrorists who had used her fortune-telling efforts to make money for them. Once Paul had delivered her from the evil spirit, her masters reacted by charging them before the highest Roman officials with stirring up trouble in the city. This led to the imprisonment of Paul and Silas.

Another pivotal person of significance in Philippi was the jailer – and his family who became converts to the Christian faith. Paul's passionate desire to see the gospel spread was unquestionably spurred with greater intensity upon seeing this conversion from hell in a jail cell.

Early Church Leader Testimony

The early church leaders who had been personally taught by the Apostles themselves are known as the Apostolic Fathers. One of them was named Polycarp. He was a bishop of

¹ "A Roman military colony was considered to be an extension of the city of Rome itself. The citizens of the colony were citizens of Rome and as such enjoyed all the privileges of such citizenship including the use of Roman law in local affairs and exemption from certain taxes. Such colonies tended to be exceedingly jealous of their status and loyal to Rome. By Roman times the gold mines had been exhausted, and the primary importance of Philippi was that it guarded the famous Egnation Way, the main east-west road across Macedonia" (Brooks, 8). It was in this city that Christianity was planted in Europe, or what Scott calls "the raising of the Christian flag in the great world of the West" (4).

Smyrna² for about half of the second century. He, in fact, also wrote a letter to the Philippians and it is contained in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Jack Sparks. In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Robert North says it “is one of the most valued of the early Christian writings” (556).

In Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 3, verse 2, he states that Paul wrote them “letters” (plural). So, the letter we have before us in the New Testament is only one of those letters. But what a letter it is. Although the word “love” (*agape*) does not occur in Philippians, a very affectionate and tender form of the word, *agapetos* (“beloved”) does occur in 2:12 and 4:1 (twice). Frank states that it “is sometimes called Paul’s love letter” (227). Therefore, the tone, tactfulness, and tenor of this letter’s spirit certainly justifies this designation.

Thematic Testimonies

The fact that most, if not all, biblical writings have more than one theme is certainly not surprising or debatable. This is certainly the case with Philippians, as well. No one should claim that “his approach to the study of a book is the only one” (Vos, 18). The following, therefore, is an effort for another approach to the study of Philippians.

The central theme which permeates all of Philippians is **1. God’s Glory** (1:11; 2:11; 3:19, 21; 4:19, 20). As is clearly seen, God’s glory is mentioned in all four chapters and this is what makes the other themes possible and acceptable to Him. **Why?** Because God’s “glory” [*doxa*] is the manifestation of His presence. And when His presence is in focus, changes occur.

In other words, when His presence permeates and saturates the lives of people, the subsequent themes of **2. Joy** (Barclay) and **3. Love** (Frank) – noted above - may be regarded as two additional themes or foundational planks within this letter. Even they, however, cannot be understood to indicate that all is rosy and full of smiles within this writing. Nevertheless, they do serve as essential factors for the recognition of other legitimate matters which must be captured and conveyed if “love” and “joy” are to be realistically **experienced** and **expressed**.

Therefore, the following are additional thematic testimonies which are revealed and regulated by **1. God’s glory, 2. Joy, and 3. Love** in action:

4. Thanksgiving (1:3)

5. Prayer (1:4-11)

6. Unity (1:12-4:20, as in:

Christ-centered Behaviors (1:12-30)

Humility (2:1-11)

Diligent pursuit of salvation (2:12-18)

Concern for others (Timothy 2:19-24; Epaphroditus 2:25-30)

Righteousness (3:1-11)

Citizens of Heaven (3:12-4:1)

Reconciliation (4:2-3)

Principles of Rejoicing and Peace (4:4-7)

Rational Thinking Patterns (4:8-9)

² Smyrna was a port city in ancient Asia, and was one of the seven churches to whom the Revelation was written (2:8-11). It is known today as Izmir in Turkey. In the first century, this city “outranked all the other cities of Macedonia” (Pidge, 3).

Gratitude (4:10-20)
Greetings (4:21-23)

When these six themes are seen as the essential ingredients and/or pivotal points around which this writing is formulated, it will be easy to see why Philipppians has been regarded as having “a message as relevant for today as for the church that first received it” (Vos. 7). In the words of Frank Thielman, Scripture is

timeless. Just as God spoke to the original audience, so he still speaks to us through the pages of Scripture. Because we share a common humanity with the people of the Bible, we discover a *universal dimension* in the problems they faced and the solutions God gave them. The timeless nature of Scripture enables it to speak with power in every time and in every culture. (8)

As seen in the structural format/outline of Philipppians (p. 5), although it is different from the above noted breakdown of *thematic testimonies*, these themes must be used as *filters* as one wanders through the structural format in the detailed commentary section.

Statistical Testimony

Philipppians is composed of 4 chapters and 104 verses. Chapter 1 has 30 verses; chapter 2 also has 30 verses; chapter 3 has 21 verses; and chapter 4 has 23 verses. These chapters have a total of 234 verbs or words of action/s which contain various tenses or ways in which those actions are demonstrated. The following breakdown sets forth those various tenses and actions:

Chapter 1:

41 present tense (*ongoing or durative actions*)

8 aorist tense (*points of actions*)

1 imperfect tense (*continuous actions in past time without any sense of completion*)

8 future tense (*actions which will occur somewhere in the future*)

6 perfect tense (*actions which are in an existing state of completion*)

Chapter 2:

32 present tense

31 aorist tense

1 imperfect tense

2 future tense

2 perfect tense

Chapter 3:

30 present tense

11 aorist tense

2 imperfect tense

2 future tense

5 perfect tense

Chapter 4:

26 present tense

16 aorist tense

- 2 imperfect
- 4 future tense
- 4 perfect tense
- 129 present tense (*ongoing or durative actions*)
- 66 aorist tense (*points of actions*)
 - 6 imperfect tense (*continuous actions in past time without any sense of completion*)
- 16 future tense (*actions which will occur somewhere in the future*)
- 17 perfect tense (*actions which are in an existing state of completion*)

Furthermore, there are 17 words which occur in the NT only in Philippians. These will be noted throughout the commentary.

Reasons for Writing

First, the church at Philippi had previously sent Paul various tokens of support (4:15-16) and had most recently sent some gift to Paul through Epaphroditis (2:25; 4:18). However, Epaphroditis had become deathly sick, news of which had somehow reached the church and caused their worisome concern about him. Upon recovery, Epaphroditis was eager to return to Philippi (2:26-27).

Second, Paul did not want the church at Philippi to think that Epaphroditis had failed in his mission of support or had deserted him. So, he was sending him back home and with his return this personal and passionate letter.

Third, this letter was full of thankfulness for the Philippian church in several ways (4:10-18).

Fourth, Epaphroditis had apparently mentioned to Paul some problems of false teaching and division which had been stirred up and Paul wrote to offer guidelines for the church in resolving the matters.

Fifth, Paul wanted to inform them of certain details or specifics about his own peculiar situation and/or circumstances – a token of his indebtedness to them and their mutual friendship.

Philippians

Structural Format

- I Specific Introduction from Paul to the Philippians (1:1-2)
 - A. Author (1:1a)
 - B. Associate (1:1b)
 - B. Audience (1:1c)
 - C. Affirmation (1:2)
- II Spiritual Interests of Paul in the Philippians (1:3-11)
 - A. Attitude of Gratitude (1:3-8)
 - B. Aspiration for Growth (1:9-11)
- III Situational Information about Paul and the Philippians (1:12-4:19)
 - A. Advancement of the Gospel (1:12-4:9)
 - 1. In Paul's Circumstances (1:12-25)
 - a. Spirit of Rejoicing (1:12-18)
 - b. Singleness of Purpose (1:19-26)
 - 2. In Philippians' Circumstances (1:27-4:9)
 - a. Standing Firm Against the Enemy (1:27-30)
 - b. Spiritually Adorned in Humility (2:1-11)
 - c. Suitable Agreement in Purpose (2:12-18)
 - d. Strategically Ambitious for Service (2:19-30)
 - e. Surrendered Acceptance of Righteousness (3:1-11)
 - f. Standard Alternatives to Pursue (3:12-4:1)
 - g. Specific Appeals to Unity (4:2-3)
 - h. Several Admonitions to Practice (4:4-9)
 - B. Acknowledgment of the Gift (4:10-19)
- IV Special Intimations from Paul for the Philippians (4:20-23)
 - A. Adoration of God (4:20)
 - B. Arrangement of Greetings (4:21-22)
 - C. Avowal of Grace (4:23)

Philippians

Commentary

I Specific Introduction from Paul to the Philippians (1:1-2)

A. Author (1:1a)

It was the custom in first century to begin written communications with the name of the one who was sending it to some person, group of people, or other location. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon all begin this way. Here in Philippians, where his name occurs only once in the letter, it is like Rom., 1 and 2 Tim., and Tit. where it occurs in the opening verse only. However, this is unlike 1 Cor. where his name occurs 8 times: 1:1, 12, 13 (2); 3:4, 5, 22; 16:21 ---- 2 Cor. 2 times: 1:1, 10:1 ---- Gal. 2 times: 1:1; 5:2 ---- Eph. 2 times 1:1; 3:1 ---- Col. 3 times: 1:1, 23; 4:18 ---- 1 Thes. 2 times: 1:1; 2:18 ---- 2 Thes. 2 times: 1:1; 3:17 ---- and Phile. 3 times: 1, 9, 19.

B. Associate (1:1b)

Paul's associate is named Timothy. He had visited Philippi twice and was thus familiar with the church (Acts 16:1, 12; 17:14; with Paul; 19:22 alone). Paul mentions him elsewhere in the NT in Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phi. 2:19; Col. 1:1; 1 The. 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 The. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:2; Phile. 1.

Paul here designates both himself and Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus." Instead of a fearful, slavish, merely hired-to-help type servanthood, however, the term depicts a servanthood of honor, dignity, humility, submissiveness, and privilege.

After all the sphere in which such servanthood is discharged in that "of Christ Jesus." This "reflects the heart of Paul's understanding of Christian existence" (Stagg, 185). In other words, it is the type service which revolves around Christ Jesus and which seeks to promote Him and His cause. This is done by Paul and Timothy as redeemed recruits who serve Jesus rather than sin.

C. Audience (1:1c)

The Christians at Philippi are here designated as "all the saints in Christ Jesus." The word "all" occurs in the opening greetings by Paul in only three other letters (Rom., 1 Cor., 2 Cor.). They are all here identified as "saints." This word is used in all of Paul's writings, except Gal., 2 Tim. and Tit., to refer to the people of God. It denotes those who have been set apart from among others as God's own family members; that is, "all that form part of the visible and spiritual community at Philippi" (Ellicott, 18). It embraces everyone who has been converted to the Christian faith and "not to a select few of special spirituality or moral excellence"

(Stagg, 185). As in the OT, so in the NT, the term “carries with it the ethical responsibilities” (Thielman, 35) which befit the people of God.

As such, the people of God are different. All of them are “consecrated to God because of their special relationship to Jesus Christ – and that is what every Christian should be” (Barclay, 11).

The additional words “in Christ Jesus” indicate that there is no single or special connection with God and His other family members apart from being joined together with Him. All saints belong to Him and to each other and “dedicated to new life, and Paul assures them that he has all of them in his mind” (Scott, 15).

Perhaps, another theological twist is under consideration also: “In distinction from the Old Covenant, our consecration to God is brought about through the historic facts of Christ and is consummated by spiritual union with Him” (Beet, 3; Eadie, 3).

However, Paul also singles out the leaders in the church by the terms “bishops and deacons” – both plurals, indicating the likelihood of more than one in the church. The word “bishop” occurs only 4 other times in the NT: Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Pt. 2:25. Here, in the plural, and in 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:7 in the single, it is one of two other terms [“elders” and “pastors”] in the NT to designate a church leader; an overseer or one who administers management responsibilities or functions. These three terms are used synonymously or interchangeably in the NT (Acts, 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5-7; 1 Pt. 5:1-2). The NIV and Rotherham prefer the translation “overseers,” while TEV prefers “leaders,” Goodspeed prefers “superintendents,” The New Jerusalem Bible prefers “presiding elders,” and the Twentieth Century New Testament prefers “President.” Since this term is linked with “deacons,” translated from another word similar to “servants” (*diakonois*), this is a clear reference to “two co-ordinated offices” Beyer, 89; 616; cp. Scott, 16) in the church at Philippi. Although the word is not used in Acts 6, many, if not most, suggest that the origin of the office of deacons lies within this chapter.

The fact that specific and concrete mention is made of these church leaders in the opening breath of this letter indicates their primary role of responsibility which will be hammered out in more detail as the letter unfolds. It is an attention-getter notation – no doubt.

[The last occurrence of this word is in 1 Pt. 2:25 and refers to Jesus.]

D. Affirmation (1:2)

This is the standard greeting with which Paul opens his letters. In 2 Tim. and Tit., however, he adds “mercy.”

This mixture of “grace and peace” never exists in isolation of one from the other. “Grace” is the unmerited, undeserved favor and good will of God to those in need. Indeed, “the whole Christian existence is one made possible only by the grace of God” (Stagg, 185).

The word “*eirene* [“peace”] denotes the blessed state of well-being into which men are brought and in which they are kept by the divine *charis* [“grace”]

(Foerster, 415). The subsequent overflow of that grace is a state of peace which results from having been reconciled or brought into a condition of union with God. Brooks (24) adds that this word *peace* “is not the absence of trouble but an attitude of serenity and well-being that can exist even in the midst of trouble.” This bestowal happens to all “imperfect people who, like Paul, ‘set themselves apart,’ gave themselves up, with all their imperfections, to be refashioned by the power that takes possession of them through Christ” (Wicks, 16). This affirmation finds its origin or source “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus taught His disciples that God was their “Father” (Mt. 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11). It is a term of personal and collective intimacy, relationship-bound, and which takes precedence over all other relationships.

Also, here are three terms which broaden our understanding of the nature of God’s Son: “Lord” (*kurios*) means His divine authority ---- “Jesus” (*Iesou*) means His divine saving ability ---- and “Christ” (*Christou*) means His divine anointing by the Father. Collectively, these three terms constitute the three-fold portrait of the monotheistic God of the Old Testament becoming, in all humility, the one human being who was perfectly anointed by that God to carry out or fulfill with divine authority the ultimate sacrifice for sins as the one and only way to make union with God possible.

II Spiritual Interests of Paul in the Philippians (1:3-11)

A. Attitude of Gratitude (1:3-8)

V. 3: “I give thanks to my God upon every remembrance of you”

With the exception of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he consistently gives thanks to God or blesses Him for the many spiritual blessings which his readers know experientially. So here, both “remembrance and gratitude are bound up together” (Ellicott, 19). Whether or not there were any regrets embodied in these twin pillars, any knowledge to the contrary or to confirm does not, apparently, exist. However, as the next verse indicates, these twin pillars unmistakably created joy which must be expressed.

V. 4: “always in every single one of my prayers for all of you, making each prayer with joy”

As seen in the introductory comments, and repeated here, the words “joy” or “rejoice” [*chara* (“joy, gladness”) – 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1 . . . *chario* (“rejoice”) – 1:18 [twice]; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10 . . . *sugchairio* (“rejoice with”) – 2:17, 18 = 16 times] saturate this letter. However, this is the only place among Paul’s letters where he specifies that he prays “with joy.” In fact, the word “everyone, all” (*pase*) “shows the exuberance of his joy in them” (Kennedy, 418).

Not one prayer for them is without an attitude of gratitude. “His prayer for them was the outflowing of an entirely joyful heart” (Pidge, 10).

V. 5: “on account of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now”

The word “partnership” (*koinonia*) may also be translated “fellowship, sharing.” This word will also appear in 2:1; 3:10. [It occurs elsewhere in the NT: Ac. 2:42; Ro. 15:26; 1 Co. 1:9; 10:16 (twice); 2 Co. 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:13; Ga. 2:9; Ep. 3:9; Phile. 6; He. 13:16; 1 Jn. 1:3 [twice], 6, 7.]

The church at Philippi had assisted Paul financially and/or otherwise, and had thereby “become part of a missionary endeavor which had swept across the Mediterranean world” (Brooks, 25); that is, “in spreading the Gospel” (Kennedy, 418). Their joint-participation exceeded any initial impulses to assist Paul and were in motion even as he writes this letter to them. Indeed, this universal gospel “could spread only through channels where persons met with persons” (Wicks, 18) and they were faithfully fulfilling their part in this regard. No wonder his joy was sky-high!

V. 6: “being in a state of complete confidence of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you shall fully finish up to the day of Christ Jesus”

As Bengel notes, “this confidence is the impulse of thanksgiving” (425).

The tense of the opening verb in this verse denotes *an existing state of being* which this translation makes plain or obvious. The “good work” which God began was their conversion/regeneration/justification/salvation. This, of course, required inner spiritual development or maturity in a process known as sanctification or the outworking of what God implanted within them. But God was also in charge of this process. Indeed, this is something which “God alone accomplishes, but the notion that it is not yet complete shows that it involves a progressive transformation of the lives of believers” (Thielman, 38). So, neither the beginning nor the ending of one’s spiritual life is exclusively in one’s own hands. Nevertheless, there is the responsibility of believers during the progressive transformation process: “cooperation and partnership” (Robertson, 436). After all, neither Paul nor the Philippians were perfect and there must always be a non-neurotic “dissatisfaction with their satisfaction over their spiritual state” (Stagg, 186).

Wicks (22) captures the essence of this truth in these words:

The bald statement of such a predicament sounds pessimistic and frustrating; and so it is, because it states only half of the truth. Paul added the other half by affirming that *God* would complete what he had begun. In other words, we were never designed to be self-sufficient, for we live, move, and have our being under the all-sufficiency of the Creator who completes what he begins.

Complacency regarding one's level of spiritual maturity must never be tolerated because it will never be reached on this planet. It will never fully materialize until "the day of Christ Jesus." This expression "the day of Christ Jesus" refers to "the day when Christ will return" (Scott, 22; Pidge, 11; Vos, 28; Kennedy, 419; Robertson, 436; Barclay, 16). "Paul never gave up hope that this would take place in his lifetime" (Brooks, 25). After all, he mentions it four other times in this single letter (1:10; 2:16; 3:20; 4:4). However, it did not happen during his lifetime, and has not happened as of the time of this writing. Nevertheless, "believers set before their minds, as the goal, *the day of Christ*, rather than their own death" (Bengel, 426).

V. 7: "For it is right for me to think this way about all of you because you have me in your heart/I have you in my heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defense or firmly establishing/vindicating/confirming of the gospel, all of you being partakers with me of grace"

The word which characterizes Paul's way of thinking about them is "right" (*dikaion*) which means "upright, good, conforming to the character of God; proper, honest, fair."

The word "think" (*phronein*) refers to attitude and occurs throughout this letter (2:2 (twice), 5; 3:15 (twice), 19; 4:2, 10 (twice)).

He further explains this type thinking with the word "because" (*dia*), denoting exactly what is in his mind: they both have each other in their hearts: "love begets love" (Robertson, 436). It is as if Paul is saying, "bonds do not restrain my love" (Bengel, 426). Indeed, there was a deeply entrenched, meaningful mutual affection between the saints at Philippi and Paul.

Paul mentions two experiences which illustrate this truth of constant connection between them: imprisonment – because of the gospel, and defending or firmly establishing the gospel wherever it was and whatever it took. They were always heads and tails of the same coin in communicating the good news of God.

The word "imprisonment" also occurs in verses 13, 14, 16.

The word "defense" (*apologia*) occurs also in v. 17. It indicates a verbal defense and stand in behalf of the gospel. [It is found elsewhere in the NT: Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 7:11; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pt. 3:15.]

The word "firmly establishing" (*Bebaiousei*) occurs only here and Heb. 6:16 in the NT. It means "the statement of a good case against an accuser" (Moule, 42).

The term which captures this connection, regardless of the two experiences, is "being partakers" (*sugkoinonous*), a word which occurs three other times in the NT: Rom. 11:17; 1 Cor. 9:23; Rev. 1:9. It is a combination of two words: *sug* ("with, together with") and *koinonous* ("fellowship, sharing, partners").

This connection was in the realm or sphere of "grace." It was this unmerited, undeserved good will and favor of God to them which "prompted them to alleviate his imprisonment, to cooperate with him in defending and propo-

gating the gospel, and to suffer for its sake” (Vincent, 10).

V. 8: “For God is my witness how I long for all of you with the affectionate, tender, merciful love of Christ Jesus”

To call upon God as one’s witness indicates that there is no higher plane or level of witness; His testimony cannot be surpassed.

The verb “long for” (*epipotheo*) is in the present tense, denoting an ongoing, always in motion kind of longing, desire, or yearning. This word occurs again in 2:26. [It occurs elsewhere in the NT: Rom. 1:11; 2 Cor. 5:2; 9:14; 1 Thes. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4; Jam. 4:5; 1 Pt. 2:2.]

The character or makeup of this constant yearning is seen in the word “affections” (*splagchna*) which occurs again in 2:1. [It is found elsewhere in the NT: Lk. 1:78; Ac. 1:18; 2 Co. 6:12; 7:15; Co. 3:12; Phile. 7, 12, 20; 1 Jn. 3:17.]

It carries with it a “peculiar warmth and tenderness” (Pidge, 13), although the pronunciation of the word is not very pleasant sounding.

The word means “the same kind of love Jesus himself has” (Brooks, 25), thus my additional translation, “tender, merciful love.”

As Moule so beautifully frames it: “The Christian’s personality is never lost, but he is so united to his Lord that the emotions of the regenerate member are, as it were, in continuity with those of the ever-blessed Head. The ministration of His life to the member is such that there is more than sympathy in the matter; there is communication” (43).

The additional words “of Christ Jesus” are not without significance: “Paul’s feeling is not his mere natural affection, but an affection so informed with Christ that it is practically Christ’s own love” (Vincent, 11).

B. Aspiration for Growth (1:9-11)

V. 9: “And this I am praying, that your love may keep on overflowing still more and more in knowledge and all discernment”

Paul’s prayers were never of a *Now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep* orientation or character. They were always specific, directional and beneficial for spiritual development and/or enrichment. Again, because neither he nor they had yet attained a spiritual status which was worthy of a graduation ceremony, he prays that their godly-kind of love (*agape*) would neither stagnate nor slumber. Paul is not saying that love does not exist among or within them. But “this disposition to relate to others for their good, regardless of cost or consequence to oneself” (Stagg, 188) is something which always stands in need of renewal. Indeed, his continual prayers were for their continued growth, advancement, and increased experience and expression of love which knew no resting place. Scott notes: “Nothing perhaps is more harmful than the easy good nature which is willing to tolerate everything; and this is often mistaken for the Christian frame of mind. Love must fasten itself on the things which are worth loving and it cannot do so unless it is wisely directed” (27).

So, Paul directs their minds to the importance of making informed decisions so that life is not bent out of proportion or stuck in a rut. He notes two things in this regard: (1) *knowledge* and (2) *all discernment*.

(1) *Knowledge* is frequently associated with reason or rational thinking abilities or capacities. If this is done solely on the basis of human reason, without the aid of divine revelation, there are, at least, three problems to address:

First, so many men are too stupid, or too pre-occupied with secular affairs, or too lazy to gather the fruits of reason. Secondly, since a true philosophy [love of wisdom] requires years of study before it can be achieved, only a few elderly people would ever acquire it. Lastly, there is that weakness of intellect, which is common to mankind, and which prevents men from ever knowing, apart from revelation, truth which they ought to have been able to discover for themselves. (Richardson, 246)³

(2) *All discernment* is also translated “judgment, insight.” This is the only occurrence of this noun in the NT, although the verb form of this word is found in Lk. 9:45. It speaks of “spiritual perception” (Robertson, 437). Kennedy’s take is that it is “a firm conception of those spiritual principles which would guide them in their relations with one another and the world. Moral sensibilities, quickness of ethical tact” (421); “that inward perception which guides right in morals as by a kind of instinct” (Pidge, 13). Bengel says it “includes spiritual sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, that is, the senses of investigation and enjoyment, as they are called” (426).

V. 10: “to approve the things which are excellent, in order that you may be sincere and faultless/blameless until the day of Christ”

The verb “approve” (*dokimazein*) means “to approve by testing,” or that which one may “embrace” (Bengel, 427) because it “leads to right moral choice” (Stagg, 188) which is “excellent” (*diapheronta*), that is, “a higher moral act” (Pidge, 13), “not merely good, rather than bad, but the best among the good, whose excellence none but the more advanced perceive” (Bengel, 427).

This may be a foundational plank for his subsequent words or instructions to the quarrelling sisters Euodia and Syntyche (4:2).

However, it certainly applies to any disturbances within the family of God. The purpose in such directives is to reflect a Christlike life style characterized by sincerity and blamelessness.

The word “sincerity” (*eilikrineis*) means “unalloyed, pure; moral and ethical purity” (Vine, 913). The behaviors of people which are “found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun’s light” (Thayer, 175). Cremer: “tested

³ Wicks summarizes Richardson: (i) most people are too busy or stupid; (ii) mature thinking takes a long time and requires mature minds which are scarce; (iii) and private interest is always twisting reason to its own ends” (26).

or judged by the sun, by the light. *i.e.*, spotless, pure, clear” (378). Moulton and Milligan: “examined by the light of the sun and found pure, sincere” (184).

The word “faultless/blameless” (*aproskopoí*) means “without giving offence (causing stumbling) to others, or without stumbling themselves. Perhaps the latter sense is more suitable here . . . blameless in their outward lives” (Caffin, 4; Moulton and Milligan, 72).

The expectation of such delivered behaviors will, of course, terminate at “the day of Christ” when “Christ will appear and claim his people” (Scott, 27).

V. 11: “having been and still being filled with fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God”

The perfect tense and passive voice of the verb “being filled” indicates what occurred in the past but which stresses present and abiding results. The use of the singular “fruit” denotes a collectiveness rather than any focus on any individual aspect of righteousness. In other words, “virtues [in a collective sense] which result from a right relationship with God” (Brooks, 25-26).

The result of this righteous conduct, made possible through their union with Jesus Christ, will reveal God’s presence in their lives (“glory”) and lead to people’s “praise” of Him. This “glory” is “the exhibition of His character and operations” (Vine, 881). That is, people will recognize the redemptive quality and features of God which deserve “praise” – commendation and approval. This “praise is the acknowledgment of [God’s] majesty by the voice and heart of man” (Caffin, 4).

Again, as noted on p. 2, “God’s glory” is the primary theme of this letter (2:11; 3:19, 21; 4:19, 20).

III Situational Information about Paul and the Philippians (1:12-4:19)

The situations and/or circumstances in which people find themselves often dictate or determine how they define ourselves (our hopes, dreams, expectations, etc.).

If our circumstances are rather positive or constructive, we are likely to be happier, hopeful, reach for the stars, and have expectations which we plan to put in motion for the highest and best outcomes. If our circumstances are rather negative or destructive, we are likely to be sadder, hopeless, downcast, and set aside our expectations in the present and for the future.

It is also true that other peoples’ perceptions of us are also impacted by the situations or circumstances in which they see us either fully functioning or floundering in failures and frustrations. This rarely happens otherwise.

There have always been, like today, many forms of *Happy-Cults* which “use religion to minister to man’s selfish aspirations for success, to their desire for escape from hard life, and to their craving for an inner peace of mind that will pull down the blinds

on the fierce gloom and woe of masses in a world of universal tragedy” (Wicks, 28). But how long may people parade under such banners of delusions? Is there a way to face headon the apparent tragedies which characterize life’s existence and do so in a way which is free from delusions and offers rock solid certainty?

Paul and the Philippian church found themselves in this type syndrome. Paul was in prison and did not know if the outcome would be release or retention. His Christian life had been one of multiple hardships (‘infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses, shipwrecks, cast down, perplexed, etc.). Was he now on the verge of death? What did the Christians at Philippi know about his situations. How were they to handle a Christian leader who appeared to be facing a hopeless end? What would happen to them?

As important as these type questions may appear to the average man, Paul was no average man and, in fact, refers to them rather infrequently in this letter. The comments he does make reflect more concern about them than himself. He was not seeking deliverance from a tumultuous life to one of comfort and ease. He could live life as it is, whatever its character or makeup, because he knew what to die for. To Paul the issue was not the pursuit of personal happiness and security but how faith in Jesus Christ could transform the life of the Philippians from windblown catastrophes into well-founded certainties which painted life’s temporary crises with eternal life’s triumphant colors.

After all, as seen in this Philippian communication, Paul’s primary concern was the advancement of the gospel in both his own situation, as well as that of his dearly loved readers, the latter representing the bulk of this letter.

A. Advancement of the Gospel (1:12-4:9)

1. In Paul’s Circumstances (1:12-25)

a. Spirit of Rejoicing (1:12-18)

V. 12: “Now I want you to know, brothers, that because of those things which fell to me [they] rather brought about the advancement of the gospel”

Paul’s purpose and desire that his readers “know” something about his own circumstances is to lay aside any anxieties they were experiencing, rumors they may have heard, and provide some degree of facts concerning his personal situation. We know this from their gift to him through Epaphroditis (2:25; 4:10, 14). And one of the reasons for writing and sending this letter to them from Epaphroditis (2:24, 28-29) was to inform them of his circumstances (1:12-25).

However, he does not belabor the point with precise and exacting details which they, and even we, would like to know. After all,

doing such could possibly have detoured him from his primary interest: how his imprisonment resulted in motivating others to speak the Word of God fearlessly and faithfully.

So, “those things which had fallen upon him” (imprisonment and related challenges) were used by God to empower and strengthen others toward extending the good news of Jesus Christ without fear, opposition notwithstanding. “Nowhere does he dwell on the hardships of his lot, but ever sets before the reader its hopeful features” (Pidge, 14). Willingness to endure suffering, however unjust it may be and whatever form it may take, while spreading the Word of God is a hallmark of New Testament Christianity.

V. 13: “so that my imprisonment in Christ became evident to all the palace guard and to all the rest”

Paul’s imprisonment was due to his commitment to Christ and not only the fact but also the reason behind his imprisonment became widely known throughout the palace guard [the emperor’s bodyguard and army]. The Greek term *praitorio* is translated “palace” (KJV), “praetorian guard” (NASB), “Imperial Guard” (Williams, Berkeley, Twentieth Century NT), “governor’s whole palace” (Beck).

“The term originally designated the commander’s (praetor’s) tent in the camp and later was applied to the official residence of the Roman governor in various cities in the provinces” (Vanelderen, 929). The meaning varies, depending on the city where it is used, so, interpreters must take context into consideration (Caffin, 4; Stagg, 189; Kennedy, 423-424; Vine, 837-838; Ellicott, 31; etc. Suffice it here to say it could have been the military barracks, the military district, or the palace itself. Since interpretive warfare over this is not necessary to capture and convey the significance of Paul’s testimony, it seems best to settle for it being the main imperial guard of about 9,000, including all the soldiers who would rotate off and on over a period of about two years.

The “rest” would include all others in the area who heard about this unusual prisoner and his reason for being there from these 9,000 or so bodyguards (the palace staff, family members, etc.). So, Paul’s imprisonment resulted in widespread witness in the “governmental circles in Rome” (Vos, 35). This widespread witness would have been highly “unlikely if Paul had not been placed in the custody of these soldiers” (Brooks, 26).

V. 14: “and most of the brothers, who are in a state of confidence

in the Lord, by means of my imprisonment [are thereby encouraged] to fearlessly take upon themselves [the opportunity] to speak the Word of God”

Paul’s imprisonment also motivated others who were confident about their commitment to Him to speak boldly and fearlessly the truths of God’s Word. The phrase “in the Lord” occurs elsewhere in this letter: 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 2, 4, 10. As to whether or not these other brothers had formerly been reluctant witnesses cannot be determined. But their new energy level had obviously been heightened as they re-lected on Paul’s willingness to suffer imprisonment and other hardships in connection with God’s Word. In 2:16, Paul calls the Word of God “the word of life” and the life-giving character and quality of God’s Word was then, and is now, worthy of urgent speaking without hesitation, reservation, or intimidation.

Do motives matter when it comes to preaching? Paul addresses this issue in vs. 15-17.

V. 15: “Some, indeed, are preaching Christ by means of jealousy and strife, and some also by means of good will”

There are two different words in the NT which are translated “preaching” – *euangelizo* (from which we get the English word *evangelism*) which occurs 55 times in the NT; and *kerusso* which occurs 65 times in the NT.

Paul uses the word *euangelizo* 22 times: Rom. 1:15; 10:15; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:16 (twice), 18; 15:1, 2; 2 Cor. 10:16; 11:7; Ga. 1:8, 9, 11, 16, 23; 4:13; Eph. 2:17; 3:8; 1 The. 3:6.

Paul uses the word *kerusso* 19 times: here . . . Rom. 2:21; 10:8, 14, 15; 1 Cor. 1:23; 9:27; 15:11, 12; 2 Cor. 1:19; 4:5; 11:4; Ga. 2:2; 5:11; Col. 1:23; 1 The. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:2.

It is unlikely that Paul is here distinguishing between heretics or false preachers and true preachers. After all, he would not state in v. 18 that he is “rejoicing” over their preaching if they were heretics. So, he is not addressing correct preaching versus preaching filled with errors. Rather, he zeroes in on the matter of motives or incentives.

The two components of improper motives are:

1. “jealousy” (*phthonon*) refers to “factious rivalry” (Vos, 36). It may be translated “envy, jealousy, spite.” It depicts “the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others” (Vine, 377). Robertson notes that “it is petty and personal jealousy of Paul’s power and prowess [brav-

ery]” (438).

2. “strife” (*erin*) refers to “contention, the expression of enmity” (Vine, 1105) or “*wrangling*” (Thayer, 249). O’Brien (100-101) views it as “a spirit of faction and intrigue . . . ‘selfishness, selfish ambition.’” Barclay (23) digs deeply into its cancerous character and describes it as that

self-seeking and selfish ambition, which was out to advance itself and did not care to what methods it stooped to attain its ends. So there were those who preached the harder now that Paul was in prison, for his imprisonment seemed to present them with a heaven-sent opportunity to advance their own influence and prestige and lessen his.

However, Paul now notes a proper motive: “good will” (*eudokian*) which is the opposite of “jealousy” and “strife.” These preachers also had a motive that was personal, “but how noble and pure, good will toward one who was the appointed defender of the gospel, whose work they regarded as a holy work, which it was their duty to help forward [since] he himself was hindered to a great extent from carrying out his mission” (Pidge, 16-17).

It is interesting that this word *eudokian* is used of God in 2:13 in describing His “good pleasure.”

[Paul uses this word elsewhere: Rom. 10:1; Eph. 1:5, 9; 2 The. 1:11. Its only other occurrences in the NT are: Mt. 11:26; Lk. 2:14; 10:21.]

Alford (158) thinks it is restricted to mean “in pursuance of good will toward Paul,” as does Robertson (439). Elliott (33) leans more toward a general sense of “kindly feeling.” Vincent (20) expands it to mean “good will toward Paul and the cause of the gospel.”

Moule (49) says it denotes “the good will of loyalty” which could apply to both Paul and the gospel.

V. 16: “some, indeed, out of love, knowing that I am appointed for [the] defense of the gospel”

Rather than the word “some” referring to another motive by others, Paul here engages in epexegetical or an additional statement which identifies more precisely what he means by *eudokian*: “love” (*agape*) – a contrasting selflessness to “jealousy and strife” which are bathed in selfishness and self-promotion. This love was for Paul and the advancement of the gospel. Instead of criticizing and opposing him, the *eudokian-agape*

oriented preachers supported him, “knowing” (*eidotes*) that he was “appointed” by God for the expansion of the gospel. The verb “knowing” is in the perfect tense which denotes a completed state or condition of existence with full knowledge about Paul’s mission. They were thereby “able to see in him a true apostle, in whose person Christianity itself was being tried” (Scott, 32). This is love in action.

The word “appointed” (*keimai*) means “*to be* (by God’s intent) *set*, i.e., *destined*” (Thayer, 343) for a specific purpose. It is a military term and means to be positioned as a good Christian soldier to defend the gospel (Vos, 36).

The word “defense” (*apologian*) is used for the second time (1:7) in this letter. Again, it is a verbal defense or stand in support of the gospel – regardless of the cost.

V. 17: “the [former] ones are preaching Christ out of selfish ambition, not with pure motive, thinking to increase affliction in my imprisonment”

The “jealousy-strife” driven preachers deliver sermons out of an insatiable desire for self-promotion and congratulations rather than “good will-love” motivation. Their ulterior motive was to cause or create additional troubles for Paul. The word “affliction” (*thlipsin*) literally means “‘friction.’ His fetters were hard to bear but these people would have them fall and chafe him. It seems almost incredible that there were Christians who took advantage of Paul’s helplessness to vex him still further, but the same thing has often happened. Nothing is more stupid and cruel than the partisan spirit” (Scott, 33).

The word “pure motive” (*agnos*) occurs nowhere else in the NT. Bengel (428) adds: “His bonds were already an *affliction*: they were adding affliction to the afflicted.”

V. 18: “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I am rejoicing. And I shall continue being glad”

In light of all the troubles he is experiencing, what shall he say? The question is rhetorical in nature. Without mutually-sliced criticism of the ill-motivated preachers, as if they were not even Christians, Paul celebrates that the content of their message was, nevertheless, centralized in Christ. Even though their motivation was corrupt, their message was the same as his: *Christocentric* – in, of, for, and about Jesus Christ. He celebrates because “the gospel has its own power even when proclaimed by people lacking in [proper] motive or character” (Stagg, 190).

Paul's exclamation that he is presently rejoicing and will continue to do so is admirable. Scott's summary is superb:

By the repetition ["I am rejoicing and I shall continue being glad"] he makes it clear that he is not merely uttering a magnanimous sentiment, but has fixed on the line of conduct which he will follow. So long as he remains in prison he will allow friends and enemies to say what they will about him without offering any protest. The discussion of his case, whether in his favor or against him, will at least spread the knowledge of Christ his Master, and this is all he cares for. (33)

b. Singleness of Purpose (1:19-26)

V. 19: "For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ"

The verb "I know" (*oida* – not *ginosko*) indicates "assured knowledge" (Muller, 57) rather than a mere collection of information. Vos (37) calls it "intuitive or absolute knowledge, knowledge of settled conviction." Vincent concurs with "absolute knowledge" and adds "settled conviction" (23).

How should one understand Paul's reference to the word *soterian* – "deliverance or salvation"? The diversity of interpretations are represented as follows:

1. Salvation: (Silva, 75-78); Thielman (75); Stagg (190); Ellicott (37); Moule (51); Jones (17); Lightfoot (102).
2. Deliverance/Release from prison: Brooks (26); Kennedy (25-27); Mounce (761).
3. Both: Muller (57); O'Brien (108-110); Eadie (44); Robertson (439)
4. Spiritual good/well-being: Barclay (24); Pidge (18); Vincent (23); Alford (159); "spiritual welfare" (Williams).
5. Difficult to determine: Scott (33-34).

So, in relation to Paul's "I know," it is likely best to truthfully reply, "We do not know" exactly or precisely what you mean by the term *soterian*. To dogmatically declare, "I/We alone know and our interpretation is infallible" is to turn the differences which divide us into self-determined grounds for disdaining – and in some instances, damning - those who dare to deviate from *our* divinely delivered *opinions*.

Paul then spins two wheels as the human/divine means by which this shady *soterian* develops:

1. "your prayers" – While an individual response to God is

necessary for admission to His family, that individuality becomes secondary to the cooperative nature of that family, at least, as far as prayers are concerned. Family members need support from other family members. The spiritual well-being of all is an interconnected network of collective intercessory prayers by all for all. Salvation and churches are not created or ordained by God as “solely private enterprises” (Thielman, 81). Prayer is the tie that binds.

2. “the support of the Spirit” – Furthermore, Christians are dependent “on the Spirit’s power in answer to the intercessory prayers of God’s people and the Spirit’s help is normally manifested through the *koinonia* [partnership] of fellow-believers” (Silva, 79).

The prayers of the people ascend from below and the support of the Spirit descends from above.

These two, of course, are not independently but interdependently related or correlated.

The word “support” (*epichoregias*) appears only here and Eph. 4:16 in the NT. It means “a grant or provision, in the sense of the rendering of what is necessary for assistance or help” (Muller, 58). This, of course, squares with the words of Jesus in John 15: 26 where the Spirit is said to be “the Comforter” (KJV, Beck) or “the Helper” (NASB, Williams) – a word composed of two separate words meaning, “called alongside.” Paul refers to the interceding work of the Spirit in Rom. 8:26.

The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” here only in the NT. He is called “the Spirit of the Lord” (Ac. 5:9; 2 Cor. 3:17-18); “the Spirit of Jesus” (Ac. 16:7); “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pt. 1:11); and “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6).

V. 20: “according to my deep desire and hope, that I shall not be ashamed in anything but with all boldness as always even now Christ shall be held in highest honor in my body, whether by life or by death”

Paul’s “spiritual welfare” is to be gauged in accordance with his “deep desire and hope.” The word “deep desire” (*apokara-dokian*) occurs only one other place in the NT: Rom. 8:19. As a combination of three separate words [*apo* (“from”) – *kara* (“head”) – *dokeo* (“watch”), it captures and conveys the idea of ‘watching eagerly with outstretched head.’

It means “looking forward to something with head erect, yearningly: eager longing and expectation” (Muller, 58).

The word “hope” (*elpida*) occurs this one time in Philippians and carries with it the idea of “assurance, confidence.” It is used elsewhere with Paul in: Rom. 4:18; 5:2, 4, 5; 8:20, 24; 12:12; 15:4, 13; 1 Cor. 9:10; 13:13; 2 Cor. 1:7; 3:12, 10:15;

Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 2:12; 4:4; Col. 1:5, 23, 27; 1 The. 1:3; 2:19; 4:13; 5:8; 2 The. 2:16; 1 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:2; 2:13; 3:7.

The expression “that I shall not be ashamed in anything” denotes a horrifying experience he is determined to avoid. The word “ashamed” (*aischunthesomai*) occurs here only in Philippians but elsewhere in the NT: Lk. 16:3; 2 Cor. 10:8; 1 Pt. 4:16; 1 Jn. 2:28. It refers to Paul’s dread and “the danger of denying his Lord under stress of hardships” (Kennedy, 427). As Trench (67) notes, it “expresses that feeling which leads to shun what is unworthy out of a prospective anticipation of dishonour.” Vine adds, “the feeling of shame arising from something that has been done . . . the possibility of being ashamed before the Lord Jesus at His Judgment Seat in His Parousia with His saints” (70). Indeed, Paul has no concern about public opinion but only of his standing with God and before God.

Paul’s preferential ‘desire and hope’ are antithetical to this possibility: “but with all boldness as always even now Christ shall be held in highest honor in my body, whether by life or by death.” The word “boldness” (*parresia*) indicates “openness, frankness, confidence, assurance before the public.” This is “opposed to fear” (Vincent, 518).

The word translated “shall be held in highest honor” (*megalunthesetai*) occurs in Philippians this one time but occurs elsewhere in the NT: Mt. 23:5; Lk. 1:46, 58; Ac. 5:13; 10:46; 19:17; 2 Co. 10:15, and is translated “enlarge, magnify, shew, praise, show great kindness.” It is not that Paul is desperately trying to be or become some super-saint in the hallowed hallway of holiness. Rather, “he wants to meet his fate, whether life or death, with such dignity and spirit that all may see what Christ means to him” (Stagg, 190).

And now “in a stirring personal confession Paul triumphantly asserts” (O’Brien, 118):

V. 21: “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”

This verse is probably one of the most quoted and noted verses in the New Testament. Paul, of course, made other similar statements about the correlation between Christ and life:

Rom. 6:4 (“newness of life”); 6:8 (“live with Him”); 6:11 (“alive to God in Christ Jesus”); 14:8 (“we live for the Lord” and “we die for the Lord”); 2 Cor. 5:15 (“they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him Who died and rose again on their behalf”); Gal. 2:20 (“Christ lives in me”); Col. 3:4 (“Christ Who is our life”); 1 The. 5:10 (“we may live together with Him”).

There can be no doubt that scriptures like these must unmistakably

reveal that the relationship between Paul and Christ was so intertwined that “his entire existence derived its [very] meaning from his Lord” (Thielman, 78). Like none before him, and perhaps few since him, Christ, for Paul, was “the object, motive, inspiration, and goal of all that the apostle does” (O’Brien, 120).

When Paul uses the word “gain” (*kerdos*) he defines death “as consummating the union with Christ” (Vincent, 423). For this same ideation, see 2 Cor. 5:1-8; Col. 3:4.

Silva’s translation also speaks with utter significance: “my life is wholly devoted to Christ and so [even] death would result to my advantage” (80).

Kennedy’s expanded comments echo the same truth:

If life meant for Paul wealth, power, self-gratification and the like, then death would loom in front of him with terror. But life for *him* means Christ. He is one with his Lord. And he knows that death itself cannot break that union, it can only make it more complete. (428)

Perhaps the average Christian still bears some degree of fear or anxiety at the prospects of death. But for Paul, “living is co-existent with Christ. To die is to cash in both principal and interest and so to have more of Christ than when living. So Paul faces death with independence and calm courage” (Robertson, 440). After all, he was no average Christian.

V. 22: “But if to live in the flesh, this [involves] fruitful labor for me, and I do not know what I shall choose”

Why did Paul use the word “flesh” instead of “body”? On many other occasions when Paul used the word “flesh” he did so in connection with sinfulness. Mounce (761-762) suggests he change terms to stress “the weak and transitory nature of physical life.” But could he not have done that with the word “body”? Or does he use the term “flesh” to emphasize straightforwardly, indeed, that “life with the encumbrance of sinful flesh is [not] a burden and a trouble” (Kennedy, 428) but is just par for the course and to view it as an opportunity in which to *glorify God* – the primary theme of this letter?

Anyway, if to die is gain, isn’t death preferable? But if to go on living an earthly life involves “fruitful labor” (*karpos ergou*) beyond what has already been experienced, then his already existing tension as a prisoner is heightened at the prospects of “a difficult decision” (Muller, 62).

When Paul says, “I do not know what I shall choose,” the word “know” “has the meaning of: to explain, declare, say, tell. It is therefore very probable that Paul uses the word here in the latter sense: ‘What I shall choose I do not say, I cannot tell, I cannot declare’” (Muller, 62).

In fact, he spells out this decision-syndrome in the next verse.

V. 23: “and I am under tension from both, having a desire to depart and to be together with Christ, for that is much better”

The word “tension” (*sunechomai*) means to be “hemmed in and under pressure from both sides . . . immobilized by two opposing considerations” (Mounce, 762). One side of the equation involves an option which would be wrapped in the clothing of what is best for me: personally profitable.

The word “depart” (*anulusai*) is found only one other time in the NT: Lk. 12:36. It was “used for the loosing of a ship from its moorings and also for breaking camp or ‘striking tent’ and came to be a metaphor for death” (Stagg, 191).

In order to emphasize the superlative nature of passing from this life to the next life with Christ, Paul uses an expression of “‘much rather better’ or ‘by far the best’” (O’Brien, 130) But as usual, Paul is not guided by his personal desires.

V. 24: “but to remain in the flesh [is] necessary for your sake”

Indeed, the other side of the equation involves an option which would be wrapped in the clothing of what is best for the Philippian Christians. And since selfless love is what dominates his mindset, the bell which rings the loudest, and the note which sounds most pleasing to him “is the need of others” (Kennedy, 429).

V. 25: “and being in this state of confidence I know that I shall remain and shall continue with you all for your advancement and joy in the faith”

The “state of confidence” Paul is “in” is that he shall remain for sake of the Philippians. The verb is in the perfect tense, denoting an existing state of present consciousness and intent. It indicates “Paul’s strong conviction on this matter” (Silva, 85).

The words “shall remain” (*meno*) “and shall continue with or alongside” (*parameno*) are words designed to reassure and comfort his readers. Paul adds the second word “not to introduce a new meaning but to make a greater impact on his readers” (Ibid.). The purpose of these words of reassurance is twofold: 1. their

“advancement” (*prokopen*) in the faith. This word was first used in v. 12 for the “furtherance of the gospel.” 2. their “joy” (*chara*) in the faith. This is the second mention of this noun (1:4), although the verb form of this word occurred twice in v. 18.

“In their life of faith, growth, development and progress were indispensable; knowledge of Christ and love of Him, obedience to Him and trust in Him had to increase, and the growing faith had to be accompanied by joy as the natural sequence of sure faith” (Muller, 65). As Vincent underscores the fact: “progressiveness and joyfulness alike characterise faith” (30).

V. 26: “in order that your ground of glorying may increase in Christ Jesus about me by my coming to you again”

The overarching purpose of it all is now set forth. Paul will refer to his own ground of glorying (*kauchema*) in 2:16. But here he refers to their ground of glorying (*kauchema*). It takes place in the sphere of “Christ Jesus” - not the church, nor any one of them in particular. That is, “the ground and reason for praise would be in Christ, because His cause would once more be advanced, and His gospel again be proclaimed among them by the apostle” (Muller, 65). As Pidge puts it, “this matter of boasting is the possession of the gospel and their state as Christians. Hence, the idea is that they may obtain a larger and richer increase of that which is their true glory and boast, the possession of the gospel and of the privileges of the Christian life” (23).

The precise ground of their glorying is particularized in the words: “about me by my coming to you again.” So, “if God is pleased to grant it, then the ground of the Philippians’ rejoicing would be the apostle, not imprisoned in some distant cell, but with them again, ministering to their needs and inspiring them as in days gone by” (O’Brien, 141). That is, “so that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus *through my ministry* when I return to you” (Silva, 86).

After all, the word *parousias* (“coming”) “simply means presence” (Stagg, 191) and is the opposite of the term *apousia* (“absence”) in 2:12.

2. In Philippians’ Circumstances (1:27-4:9)

Paul now shifts from rather brief perspectives on his own circumstances to rather elongated perspectives on the circumstances of the Philippians.

a. Standing Firm Against the Enemy (1:27-30)

V. 27: “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the

gospel of Christ, in order that whether I come and see you or am absent I hear things concerning you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one purpose and are cooperatively working together for the faith of the gospel”

The word “only” (*monon*) is a link with the preceding but more importantly begins a new section and “introduces an admonition ‘lifted like a warning finger’ and brings out the emphatic nature of the imperative statement that follows” (O’Brien/Barth, 145). The admonition is, indeed, a present tense imperative verb which means to “go on conducting yourselves, living” (*politeuesthe*)⁴ in a certain manner. So, the word “only” directs the readers’ attention to “the action designated by the verb” (Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, 529).

The word “worthy” (*axios*) is an adverb. It does not mean that we are to be worthy of it but to live “worthily” or in a manner that is consistent with or in keeping with some standard, expectation, goal that is fitting or proper.

The particular manner that is specified is one which is proper for “the gospel of Christ.” In other words, “as they are wholly committed to the advance of the gospel, that is, its dynamic onward march, they will walk worthily of the gospel by holding fast to it, preaching and confessing it in spite of opposition and temptation” (O’Brien, 148). Indeed, if, as Thielman suggests, there are any political ramifications, “then Paul is telling the Philippians to govern their lives according to the gospel rather than to society’s requirements for being a good citizen of Philippi” (93).

V. 28: “not being alarmed in any way by the enemy, which is to them a sign of destruction, but of salvation for you, and this from God”

The word “being alarmed” (*pturomenoi*) occurs only here in the NT. It means “to frighten; be scared, timid.” Or, as Bengel adds, “with a great and sudden terror” (431). This is the only occurrence of this word in the NT.

The word “the enemy” (*ton antikeimenon*) may be translated “adversaries” (KJV), “opponents” (NASB, Williams), “enemies” (Beck). Paul uses this same term in 1 Cor. 16:9; Gal. 5:17; 2 The. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:10; 5:14. Luke uses it in Luke 13:17; 21:15. Kennedy offers the following as to the identity of the terrorists:

Probably he thinks chiefly of their heathen antagonists, as in any case, Jews seem to have formed a very small

⁴Robertson (441) points out that this word comes from “*polites*, citizen, and that from *polis*, city, to be a citizen, to manage a state’s affairs, to live as a citizen. Only twice in N.T., here and Acts 23:1.”

minority of the population. These pagans of Philippi, on the other hand, would struggle hard against a faith which condemned all idol-worship, for the extant remains at Philippi and in its neighbourhood show that they were an extraordinarily devout community. At the same time, we cannot exclude the possibility that he had non-Christian Jews in mind as well. (431)

The case of “not being alarmed in any way by the enemy” is loaded with significance. Paul speaks of two ways in which this lack of alarm or standing firm against the enemy with courage will impact those around them.

(1) The adversaries will view this courage as “a proof of their destruction, by clearly revealing the divine source of their own spiritual strength” (Pidge, 24). In the words of Mounce, the adversaries will see that “their attempts to thwart the gospel were futile and only led to their own destruction . . . and that God was on the other side” (763). Vincent adds, “their loss of eternal life or their own spiritual ruin” (35).

(2) Those who stand firm will themselves, plus the other believers who stand with them, experience in an extraordinary way “God’s presence and power” (Pidge, 24). As Caffin phrases it: “The courage of God’s saints in the midst of dangers is a proof of his presence and favor, a token of final victory (comp. 2 Thess. i. 5)” (7). This is “a direct indication from God . . . a sure token of deliverance” (Lightfoot, 106).

V. 29: “because it has been granted to you for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake”

“Suffering is a normal part of the Christian life. Such was the teaching of Jesus” (Brooks, 27). However, this suffering is not something in the abstract

but the personal Christ . . . On him they believe, for him they suffer, a special grace, because, when rightly endured, it works out the believer’s sanctification (Rom. 2:3ff). Paul looks beyond the malice of enemies and beholds in their efforts the divine favor toward his suffering people. (Pidge, 25).

In other words, “if they viewed it in God’s light, they would discover that suffering for the gospel’s sake was a gift of God’s grace” (53).

V. 30: “while experiencing the same opposition, which you saw in me and now hear in me”

It has been suggested that verses 28-29 are parenthetical and and that this verse continues the thought of v. 27. Here Paul compares his own experiences of opposition from enemy forces to their own. After all, “He had himself been persecuted at Philippi (Acts xvi.; 1 Thess. ii. 2); now the Philippians heard of his Roman imprisonment, and were themselves suffering similar persecutions” (Caffin, 7). The fact that Paul’s own ministry had been a struggle for the sake of the gospel may be seen also in 1 Cor. 9:24-27, among other places. “Paul wanted his readers to know that the fight of faith is common to all Christians. In nature and essence, Christians share the same struggle” (Robbins, 54).

b. Spiritually Adorned in Humility (2:1-11)

Humility is the underlying *attitude* which promotes meaningful connections and interactions with one another in the church. Even though the word itself [*tapeinophrosune*] occurs only once in this section of scripture (v. 3), its spirit animates the section. The word translated “attitude, mind, think, care” (*phroneo*) occurred first in 1:7; 2:2 (twice), 5; 3:15 (twice), 19; 4:2, 10 (twice). This attitude of humility runs counter to such attitudes as “selfish strife” (*eritheian* – 1:17; 2:3)⁵ and “empty conceit, vanity” (*kenodoxia*) which disrupt unity and harmony (v. 3). Christ Himself is presented in vs. 5-11 as the supreme example of the appropriate attitude to adopt.

V. 1: “Therefore, since [there is] some encouragement in Christ, some consolation of love, some partnership by the Spirit, some tenderheartedness and compassionate sympathy”

There are four conditional clauses in this verse, as indicated by the word “if.” However, this is known as a first class conditional term and indicates *reality* – not probability or possibility. There is no uncertainty here but an “in view of the fact” (Erdman, 76). So, the above translation captures this *reality* by the word “since.” The four terms which are here declared to be true are loaded with uniqueness in their own right. Taken together, they constitute four features, components, or ingredients of humility’s character or makeup. They are “intended to move the hearts of his readers and awaken them to the importance of the injunction” (Silva, 101) in

⁵ This term is linked with *phthonon* (“envy”) in v. 1:15. Paul also links these two terms in 1 Tim. 6:4.

v. 2: “complete/fulfill my joy” (*plerosate you ten charan*).

1. “encouragement in Christ” – The word “encouragement” (*para klesis*) may be translated “help, comfort, admonition, consolation, union.” The word itself is composed of two separate words: *para* (“beside, alongside”) and *klesis* (“call, calling”). This encouragement is “in Christ” and that in itself “must gain for it a favorable reception” (Kennedy, 432).

2. “consolation of love” – The word “consolation” (*paramuthion*) occurs only here in the NT and may be translated “comfort, incentive.” As to whether this is the comfort of the love of Christ for them, or “the mutual affection that Paul and the Philippians have for one another and to which Paul appeals when he urges his readers to make his joy complete (2:2)” (Thielman, 96) is not without controversy. Could it be both? Either position provides another “ground of appeal” (Vincent, 429). This type love “has persuasive power to move you to concord” (Vincent, 54). That is, love is the source of this consolation and concord. In the word of a song, “love will keep us together.”

3. “partnership by the Spirit” – The word “partnership” (*koinonia*) may also be translated “fellowship, a close mutual relationship, sharing in.” As Paul noted elsewhere in his writings (Rom. 7:4; 12:5; 1 Cor. 6:15; 10:16; 12:27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 2:17), the church is “the body of Christ.” So, it is the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ or Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pt. 1:11) Who is “the unifying Principle of [this community] life” (Kennedy, 432) of believers. Vincent, however, says it does not denote so much the fellowship among the members of the body of Christ as it does “with the Holy Spirit” (54). This may, however, be an instance of straining at gnats and swallowing camels. Why can it not encompass both, if push comes to shove?

4. “tenderheartedness and compassionate sympathy” – The word “tenderheartedness” (*splagchna*), which first occurred in 1:8 in reference to Jesus Christ, now denotes “the organ or seat of compassionate emotions” (Vincent, 54). The word “compassionate sympathy” (*oiktirmoi*) means “*emotions, longings, manifestations of pity*” (Thayer, 442). While this may denote the emotions themselves, Silva suggests that the two words may simply mean the same thing (103). O’Brien, however, says they point to the objective realities of what they had experienced in Christ because “the focus of attention is upon the divine mercy and compassion” (176). F. W. Beare stresses that the primary emphasis is “their experience of the **tenderness and pity** of Christ, his merciful goodness to them but that the thought passes over readily from Christ’s merciful goodness to the tenderness and pity that have been stirred in their hearts [to others] through the grace of Christ”

(71). In other words, “this door swings both ways.”

Therefore, these four prominent features or ingredients within *humility*, having already been experienced and now in need of appropriate expressions among themselves, “provides his readers with an additional motive for living in harmony” (O’Brien, 176). In this way, they are one in motive and manner when it comes to obeying his command in the next verse: “fill up my cup of joy” (Williams); “make my best hopes for you come true” (J.B. Phillips); “make me truly happy” (Taylor); “make me very happy” (Beck); “complete my joy” (RSV); “fill up my cup of happiness” (New English Bible); “make my joy complete” (The New Jerusalem Bible; NIV).

V. 2: “Bring to completion my joy in order that you may keep on thinking the same thing, having the same love, having unity of spirit, thinking the one thing”

In 1:4-5, Paul spoke of the “joy” he received from them and their consistent participation in the gospel. Now, he wants them to add to or complete that joy in an additional way.

The verb “bring to completion” (*plerosate*) is in the imperative mood and aorist tense. [This tense denotes “action simply as occurring, without reference to its progress and predominates in the NT” (Dana and Mantey, 193). Robertson that this tense and mood “in the N.T. is remarkably frequent” (855). Winer notes: “The Aorist Imperat. denotes an action that is either transient and instantaneous, or to be undertaken but [or *at*] once” (313)].

This is the third (1:4, 25) appearance in Philippians of the noun “joy.” [The verb “rejoice” occurred twice in 1:18]. This “joy” is the second item mentioned in Paul’s cluster of the fruit produced by the Spirit (Ga. 5:22-23).

Having itemized four ingredients of humility in v. 1, he now identifies four other features of humility which promote unity in the church.

1. “keep on thinking the same thing” – that is, “working together harmoniously because in all of them there is the same disposition and they will all be in harmony” (Scott, 43); “by being like-minded” (Silva, 103). This expression “is a general one for concord” (Vincent, 429).

2. “having the same love” – that is, the “love” (*agape*) which is selfless and sacrificial and looks for the good in and for others.

3. “having unity of spirit” – that is, this one word (*sumpsuchoi*), which occurs here only in the NT, implies “wholeheartedly” (Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, 789); “of one accord” (Thayer,

598); “the same feelings” (Kennedy, 28);

4. “thinking the one thing” – that is, “the same point of view in their common interests – the one concrete aim of their views, perhaps with special reference to the unity of the Church” (Kennedy, 28).

So, when these eight features or ingredients of humility are adopted or appropriated, “unity” will prevail. After all, this “unity” which springs from “humility” was “far deeper and more vital than mere agreement of opinion, or sameness of policy, or cooperation in practice. What he desired was unity produced in the lives of those who had their hearts directed to Christ, who could make them one” (Robbins, 56). This unity could not then, and cannot now, be divorced from the spirit of “humility” which produces such unity.

So, it is clear to see the direction Paul is driving as he progresses from Standing Firm Against the Enemy (1:27-30) to being Spiritually Adorned in Humility (2:1-2) and will continue accenting additional perspectives on this adornment in humility in verses 3-4, and the supreme example of it in Christ Himself in verses 5-11.

V. 3: “while [thinking] nothing which is in accordance with selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility of mind you yourselves considering others more important than yourselves”

The word “selfish ambition” (*eritheian*) first appeared in 1:17. It carries “the notion of a greedy attempt to gain the upper hand through underhanded tactics” (Thielman, 97). It denotes “the ‘mercenary spirit’ which causes factions” (O’Brien, 180) with “*faction* as the regulative state of mind” (Vincent, 430). The word “vain conceit” (*kenodoxian*) occurs here only in the NT. It signifies “delusion, vainglory” (Oepke, 662); “*illusion, error; be caught on the fishhooks of false doctrine; let oneself be misled by someone’s delusions*” (Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, 428). Although this word occurs nowhere else in the NT, a form of the word, *kenodoxos*, occurs in Gal. 5:26 “where it appears to be understood as involving a spirit of envy and provocation [and] perhaps that is the nuance here in Philippians” (Silva, 104).

“It is a strange phenomenon in religious history that intense earnestness so frequently breeds a spirit mingled with censoriousness and conceit” (Kennedy, 433).

The word “but” (*alla*) is an adversative conjunction which calls for something radically different in one’s thought processes.

The single arresting thought process which Paul identifies is “humility of mind” (*tapeinophrosune*). [This word occurs elsewhere in the NT: Ac. 20:19; Eph. 4:2; Col. 2:18, 23; 3:12; 1 Pt. 5:5.] The word denotes having “the same direction” (Bengel, 432). Thayer adds, “*having a humble opinion of one’s self; a deep sense of one’s (moral) littleness; modesty, humility, lowliness of mind*” (614). Trench notes the meaning of the word “as springing out of and resting on the sense of unworthiness” (150). [This word is found in the OT: Ps. 130:2 (verb); Prov. 16:19 (noun)].

The following three participles explain what “humility of mind” means.

1. “you yourselves considering others” – This is a present tense middle voice participle which places responsibility upon oneself to adjust the way one thinks and regards other people. There is always plenty of room for modifications or adjustments in this regard.

2. “being more important than yourselves” – This is a present tense active voice participle which qualifies the manner in which one’s thinking is to be directed. This is not another form of self-aggrandisement flipped outwardly. Rather, Christians are to see the various spiritual gifts which God gives to each one, and not be jealous or resentful over not having the gift/s which others have. No single Christian has exclusive claim to all the gifts and talents there are. There is always plenty of room for appreciation of what others have in the body of Christ. Cp. my writing on *The Biblical Recipe for Church Functioning and Growth: Spiritual Gifts* on my website: archive.org/details/@mandm313.

V. 4: “not keeping one’s attention on your own interests but also on the interests of others”

3. “not keeping one’s attention” – This is a present tense active voice participle which further defines the nature of “humility of mind.” It is the opposite of self-focus and self-preoccupation. It is a slap in the face to selfish ideations. The emphasis here is that which “promotes the good of others even at personal expense” (Thielman, 97). True humility consists of not being obsessed with one’s own privileges and status but looking at the privileges, status, talents, gifts and endowments of others in an admirable way, together with thankfulness and support for them. The word “also” “assumes that one may rightfully see to one’s own interests, but that in addition to that the interests of others should also be minded. You must love your neighbor as yourself” (Muller, 75-76).

The supreme example of humility is now portrayed (vs. 5-11)

V. 5: “Keep on thinking among yourselves in the same manner which was also in Christ Jesus”

The manner of thinking which Paul here commands his readers to maintain is *humility* (the absence of pride; modesty, submitting without fear to abuse or maltreatment; sacrificial; unassuming; obedient).

V. 6: “Who existing in nature as God did not think equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage”

The word “nature” (*morphe*) occurs only here in the NT. It “means the essential attributes [of God]. In his preincarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God and so appeared to those in heaven who saw him. Here is a clear statement by Paul of the deity of Christ” (Robertson, 444). It is extremely important

to note that the author does not say that Christ was ‘the form of God’, but that he was ‘*in* the form of God, as though the form of God was a sphere in which he existed . . . the embodiment of the form since possession of the form implied participation in its nature or character. . . ‘the essential nature and character of God’ (O’Brien, 206-207).

Thus, the above translation: “Who existing in nature as God.” The word “equality” (*isa* – “equal, the same; equality”) appears elsewhere in the NT: Mt. 20:12; Mk. 14:56, 59; Lk. 6:34; Jn. 5:18; Ac. 11:17; Re. 21:16. This word “implies his *fulness* and *exaltation*, as appears from the double contrast, ver. 7, 8, *He emptied and humbled himself*” (Bengel, 433). After all, Jesus never directly called Himself “God,” but chose “Son of Man” more often than “Son of God” (Bengel, 433). The “Son of Man” occurs about 80 times in the gospel accounts and “is always a self-designation on the part of Jesus” (Stagg, 58). Plus, “it is characteristic of the Synoptic gospels that they do not quote him as using the phrase ‘Son of God’” (Johnson, 411),

The word *harpagon* (“something to grasp after; something to snatch or hold on to” – “a prize” [Robertson, 444]) occurs here only in the NT and “speaks of a thing already possessed, which one may be tempted to hold on to” (Silva, 117). But “Christ’s unselfishness expressed itself in a decision not to aspire for some-

thing greater than He already had or not to use selfishly what He already had” (Ibid, 118). Rather, Christ “chose to regard it [His equality with God] as self-giving and to act on that understanding” (O’Brien, 214).

Thus, the above translation: not as “something to be used for his own advantage” (cp. Ibid, 206).

It may be that “v. 6 is simply concerned to state negatively what the main verbs in vv. 7-8 state positively: Jesus refused to make a selfish choice with respect to His divinity” (Silva, 117).

Vs. 7-8 depict His humiliation and vs. 9-11 His exaltation:

V. 7: “But He laid aside what He possessed, having chosen the form of a servant, having come in the likeness of men, and having been found in human likeness”

The verb “He laid aside” (*ekenosen*) may be translated “emptied, deprive of power, make of no meaning, give up, lay aside.” Christ “gave up” the glories of heaven for the glooms of earth; He “gave up” His omnipresence (“being everywhere at the same time”) to the limitations of time, place, and space; etc.

The word “Himself” (*eauton*) makes emphatic a profound truth. For example, “a grasping hand frequently empties those on whom it is laid. So did the hand of the Eternal Son: but it was upon *Himself* that the violent hand was laid” (Beet, 67).

This is a shocking statement. This is revelation of truth which exceeds the speculations of theories. Indeed, “instead of appearing among men in the Divine form and thus compelling them to render Him the homage which was His due, He ‘emptied Himself’ of that Divine form and took the form of a bond-servant” (Kennedy, 437).

The following three participle clauses in this verse portray the meaning of this humiliation:

1. The word “having chosen” (*labon*) indicates a decision He made about His equality with God. Again, rather than ‘grasping’ that which was His by one “form” (in both nature and character), He “laid aside” such distinction and ‘grasped’ another “form”: “a servant” (*doulou*). The understanding which was common to both Paul and the Philippians provided the foundation for using this term but with theological significance. That is, “the slave in Greco-Roman society was deprived of the most basic human rights. In the same way, Christ refused to exploit the privilege of his deity and, giving up that right, became a slave” (Thielman, 117-118). It was not that He “simply took on the external ap-

pearance of a slave or disguised himself as such. Instead, he became a slave, adopting the nature and characteristics of one” (O’Brien, 218).

2. The word “having come” (*genomenos*) is a middle voice which indicates He Himself cooperated with all the above noted limitations about “the likeness of men” (*homoiomati anthropon*). The word “likeness” (*homoiomati*) occurs here only in Philippians but elsewhere in the NT: Rom. 1:23; 5:14; 6:5; 8:3; Rev. 9:7. It “denotes a relation to other things of the same condition” (Bengel, 434). Not the exact relation but one which is “like, similar.” That is, Christ was truly a human being but He was more than a human being. Due to His divine nature which merged with His human nature, He was not “*simply and merely man*, but the *incarnate* [in the flesh] *Son of God*, so that the power of the higher divine nature was united in Him with the human appearance, which was not the case in other men” (Meyer, 75). It was the mysterious uniting of humanity and divinity in one person: similar to our flesh but without the sinful component.

3. The word “having been found” (*heuretheis*) echoes further verification of the humiliation within his humanity. He was found or seen in the eyes of other human beings to be a real human being. However, another word [besides *morphe* in v. 6 concerning His preincarnate state, and *homoiomati* in v. 7 in which there was a perfect uniting of His human nature and His divine nature] is now used: *schemati* (“outward form; present form of this world; likeness, appearing in human likeness”) – a word which appears only one other time in the NT: 1 Cor. 7:31. Here the word refers to His “dress, clothing, food, gesture, words, and actions – a common man, as if he were nothing else besides, and as if he did not excel other men; he assumed to himself nothing extraordinary” (Bengel, 434). It signifies “his whole outward presentation [in which there did not appear] any difference between Him and the other children of men” (Trench, 263).

V. 8: “He humbled Himself, having become obedient until death, even death of a cross”

The word “humbled” (*etapeinosen*) defines what the word “laid aside” in v. 7 means. It reveals how “the self-emptying manifests itself” (Vincent, 435). Paul uses this same word in 4:12. [He uses it elsewhere in his writings: 2 Cor. 11:7; 12:21.] “It is a voluntary humiliation on the part of Christ and for this reason Paul is pressing the example of Christ upon the Philippians, this supreme example of renunciation” (Robertson, 445). The word “obedient” (*hupekoos*) occurs only two other times

in the NT: Ac. 7:39; 2 Co. 2:9. Here, this last part of v. 8 “introduces the idea of Jesus’ death, which constituted the lowest point of his humiliation. Only slaves and aliens were ordinarily subject to such a horrible death as that by crucifixion” (Brooks, 29).

In the summary words of Jac. Muller:

The whole time of His sojourn on earth was a time of self-humiliation. He was being humiliated and abased, instead of commanding and ruling in power and majesty and occupying a place of honour and authority and preeminence among men. From the manger to the cross He trod a path of humiliation, which culminated in the misery and suffering and reproach of a shameful death on a tree. Obedience unto God and surrender and submission to the will of God was maintained by Him unto the end, and the profoundest degree of humiliation was reached in that His death was not to be a natural or an honorable one, but was the painful and accursed death of the cross (cf. Deut. 21:23; Ga. 3:13).

Again. vs. 9-11 depict His exaltation.

V. 9: “For this reason God highly exalted Him and graciously granted to Him the name which is above every name”

As Lenski brings things clearly into focus:

Only the human nature could experience the exaltation as it alone could undergo the humiliation. The logos was not withdrawn and then restored. No attributes were emptied out from either the divine or the human nature and were then replaced. The plenary use of the divine attributes communicated to the human nature at the time of the incarnation constituted the exaltation. The exaltation thus corresponds to the humiliation. Because it deals with the human nature, we now read that, whereas Christ lowered *himself*, not he but *God* exalted him. (787)

The words “for this reason” are actually one word in Greek, *dio*) and may be translated “therefore, wherefore” to point out the reasoned consequence of what follows. Because of the renunciation and obedience which He consistently demon-

strated, His own words, “he who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11/18:14) find ultimate fulfillment in Himself. In other words, “what Jesus taught others he himself incarnated” (Stagg, 197).

The word “highly exalted” (*hyperupsosen*) occurs only here in the NT. It is a word of superlative, rather than comparative, significance. It means to “raise to the highest position.” He, so to speak, “won his sovereignty” (Scott, 50). As Kennedy states it: “The Divine glory which he always possessed can never be enhanced” (438). The implication, if not clear-cut declaration, is that “God gave to his Son a more exalted place than he had previously” (Brooks, 29): “above or beyond the state of glory which he enjoyed before the Incarnation” (Robertson, 445). Pidge points out the same: “The exaltation here referred to is Christ’s elevation to the right hand of God, his investiture as King of saints, with full power, dominion, and glory. The glory which Christ willingly resigned he has received again with greater fullness than ever” (31).

[For an expanded look at the supremacy or superiority of Christ, see my commentary on the NT book of Hebrews in my website: archive.org/details/@mandm313 – Superiority of Person of Christ (1:1-4:13) – Superiority of Priesthood of Christ (4:14-10:18) – Superiority of Profession of Faith in Christ (10:19-13:25)].

“The name which is above every name” is still the name “Jesus” (v. 10). Now, however, that name is saturated with an expanded, fuller, and ultimate meaning well-beyond that name while in the flesh on this earth. Then, it was often used, abused, vilified, mocked, ridiculed, and blasphemed by the forces of evil.

Now, that name is filled with ultimate majesty, unparalleled glory, exclusive divine dignity, and the God-Man uniqueness Who brings God and Man together. This name is no longer just another name such as Peter, Pontius Pilate, or Paul. This name “now embodies the whole blesseded, glorious revelation of the Savior. [Just as] the name ‘Lord’ – and any other individual designation – does identically the same thing” (Lenski, 790). It is the one and only name which is *soteriological* (“relating to salvation: regeneration, sanctification, glorification” in all its fullness). It is the exclusive name by which people may know God and be known by God (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).

V. 10: “That at the name of Jesus every knee of heaven and earth and under the earth may bow”

Again, that “name which is above every name” is here identi-

fied: *Jesus* (Lk. 1:31-33; 2:21) In addition to its soteriological significance, it also is limitlessly linked to “universal adoration” (Caffin, 61). The ‘bowing of the knee’ is an idiom or unique expression which indicates comprehensive adoration and worshipful expressions.

The word “heaven” refers to all the saints and angels in that domain of delightfulness.

The word “earth” refers to all the human beings which populate earth’s temporary territory.

The word “under the earth” (*katachthonion*) occurs here only in the NT. It encompasses all the forces of wickedness which oppose Him (the devil, the demons, and all the damned).

V. 11: “and every tongue may acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God [the] Father”

The expression “every tongue” indicates that all human beings and all living beings just noted in v. 10 will eventually acknowledge or confess “what the small, persecuted community at Philippi confesses in its worship – ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’” (Thielman, 122).

The word “Lord” (*kurios*) “implies a position equal to that of God and thus designates the position of the Risen Lord . . . that the risen Jesus is *kurios* is state throughout the NT . . . In Him God acts as is said of the *kurios* in the OT” (Foerster, 1089, 1094). It is a sad and flat note that the term “Lord” has lost the meaning it had in the Apostolic Age of the first century. As Kennedy exclaims, “the term ‘Lord’ has become one of the most lifeless words in the Christian vocabulary” (439).

But as Wicks makes plain: “All kinds of saviors will promise to change the world from outside, and they can bestow certain external benefits; but at long last man must be freely won away from self if he is to know the true ‘liberty of the children of God’” (52). And that freedom from self only comes through knowing the One Truly Selfless One characterized by and in these infallible truths. The words of Paul Tillich provide eye-opening, mind-embracing, heart-arresting perspectives on these infallible truths this way:

Even the greatest in power and wisdom could not more fully reveal the Heart of God and the heart of man than the Crucified has done already. Those things have been revealed once for all. ‘It is finished.’ In the face of the Crucified all the ‘more’ and all the ‘less,’ all progress and all approximations, are meaningless. Therefore, we say of Him alone: He is the new reality; He is the end. He is the Messiah. To the Crucified alone we can say,

‘Thou art the Christ.’ (150)

It is all to the glory of God the Father! That is, it all reveals Himself in action. For truly and “clearly, the worship of Jesus as Lord does not imply competition with the Father, who receives even greater glory through the glorification of the Son” (Silva, 133). Indeed, “this lordship of Jesus in no way threatens or rivals God. Quite the reverse, for it actually reveals the divine glory since the Father has planned that this should be so” (O’Brien, 251). It is Christ’s lordship which points people to the God Who arranged it to be this way. In this sense, the lordship of Christ manifests and/or reveals God as His Father. In this way, both honor each other in a glorious way. Again, “God’s glory” is the primary theme of this letter (1:11; here; 3:19, 21; 4:19, 20).

c. Suitable Agreement in Purpose (2:12-18)

V. 12: “So, my unforgettable ones, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but now much more in my absence, keep on conscientiously carrying out your own salvation with reverential respect and trembling awe”

The word “so” (*hōste*) may be translated “therefore, wherefore, accordingly, for the purpose of, in order that, etc.” It serves as an urgent note of introductory appeal that there is a major purpose with which all his readers must be in suitable agreement. The elaboration which unfolds in this verse will be expanded into different components in verses 13-18.

Lest there be any misunderstanding as to the tone or manner in which he addresses this purposeful concern, he uses a term of endearment and tenderness: “beloved ones” (*agapētoi*) – which term he uses again in 4:1 (twice). It is a term denoting that they are “unforgettable ones” – by himself and God. With specific notice of his recollective recognition of their obedience to God while he was with them, he now exerts a special notice of his enduring recognition that their obedience had actually increased or expanded (“much more”) since he had left them. As Lenski observes, “there is always a tendency to relax obedience when the spiritual leader is absent” (796-797) but they had consistently resisted that tendency.

The word “absence” (*apousia*) occurs here only in the NT. The verb “keep on conscientiously carrying out” (*katergazesthe*) is a present tense imperative, thus a command to consistently stay on course. The word is often translated “work out” (KJV, NASB, Williams, Beck) and indicates the expenditure of per-

sonal energy and effort in the process.

Paul specifies that this energy and effort are for “your own salvation.” So, while Christianity is a corporate matter (all are fellow members of the body of Christ, each with individual gifts which benefit all others), there is this individual matter of responsibility which must be faced and embraced when it comes to developing one’s salvation to its maximum extent. In other words, what God gives in the instant of regeneration or the new birth must be fertilized, flowered (to cause to blossom and bloom), and activated for increasing fruitfulness.

This concern is always with one’s own salvation, in spite of one’s concern for the interests of others. Interest in the spiritual welfare of others should not result in the neglect of one’s own spiritual welfare. One should go on uninterruptedly making provision for one’s own soul. . . . The believer is called to self-activity, to the active pursuit of the will of God, to the promotion of the spiritual life in himself, to the realisation of the virtues of the Christian life, and to a personal application of salvation. He must ‘work out’ what God in His grace has ‘worked in’” (Muller, 91).

In its fullest and broadest nature, salvation involves a past experience, a present process and a future consummation. The past experience of regeneration/new birth provided deliverance from the penalty of sin; the future consummation will provide deliverance from the presence of sin; and the present process of sanctification provides deliverance from the dominating power of sin. It is this present process which is the focus of these two verses (12 and 13).

The words of Henry Drummond must be incorporated here:

Whatever rest is provided by Christianity for the children of God, it is certainly never contemplated that it should supersede personal effort. And any rest which ministers to indifference is immoral and unreal – it makes parasites and not men. Just because God worketh in him, as the evidence and triumph of it, the true child of God works out his own salvation – works it out having really received it – not as a light thing, a superfluous labor, but with fear and trembling as a reasonable and indispensable service. (335)

Indeed, the words “reverential respect and trembling awe”

denote the spirit in which this progressive perspective of one's salvation is to be exercised.

This "reverential respect" (*phobou* – "fear") does not indicate a dreadful, fear-inspiring terror. It embodies

self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation; it is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness. It is taking heed lest we fall; it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Saviour. And it is these the child of God will feel and exercise the more he rises above the enfeebling, disheartening, distressing influence of the fear which hath torment. (Vincent, 437-438)

V. 13: "For it is God Who is working in you both to energize and to activate in behalf of [His] good will/pleasure/delight"

Even though Paul is "absent," God is not. This fact alone should provide sufficient motive for wholehearted cooperation with God in the development of one's salvation since it is His good will to do so. That is, God Alone is the Prime Mover "but he puts us to work also and our part is essential, as he has shown in verse 12, though secondary to that of God" (Robertson, 447).

This effort which Paul is here emphasizing does not contradict or represent additional truths about salvation by faith which Paul belatedly decided to reveal. There is not anything here which is inconsistent with faith. This effort is, in fact, "the truest expression of trust. A faith which does not express itself in such reverent and earnest effort is false and dead. The very fact that God is working is given as the ground of the exhortation for them to work" (Erdman, 89).

Murray (140-141) notes that "God's working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. . . . The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God."

The word translated "good will/pleasure/delight" (*eudokias*) first occurred in 1:15. [Paul uses it elsewhere: Rom. 10:1; Eph. 1:5, 9; 2 The. 1:11.] It indicates "to satisfy his benevolent disposition – the reason for God's activity is to be found in the promptings of his gracious will" (Pidge, 33). In the words of

John Chrysostom: “‘for love’s sake,’ for the sake of pleasing Him; to the end that we may do that which is acceptable to Him; that the things may be done according to His will” (93). Again, it must be stressed that Paul is dealing here with the sanctification (not regeneration or consummation) part of salvation “which requires conscious effort and concentration not in a legalistic spirit, with a view to gaining God’s favor, but rather in a spirit of humility and thanksgiving, recognizing that without Christ we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5) and so He alone deserves the glory” (Silva, 140) – *His glory being the primary theme of this letter* [1:11; 2:11; 3:19, 21; 4:19, 20].

V. 14: “Practice living always without murmurings and disputings”

Here is another present tense imperative verb which denotes an ongoing pattern of how life is not to be conducted. Here Paul mentions two specific sins which “apparently had been troubling the congregation” (O’Brien, 290).

The word “murmurings” (*goggusmon*) occurs here and three other places in the NT: Jn. 7:12; Ac. 6:1; 1 Pt. 4:9.

This is the word used of the murmurings of the Israelites in their desert wanderings. “It describes the low, threatening, discontented muttering of a mob who distrust their leaders and are on the verge of an uprising” (Barclay, 43).

The word “disputings” (*dialogismon*) occurs here and thirteen other places in the NT: Mt. 15:19; Mk. 7:21; Lk. 2:35; 5:22; 6:8; 9:46, 47; 24:38; Ro. 1:21; 14:1; 1 Co. 3:20; 1 Ti. 2:8; Ja. 2:4.

Here the word indicates different kinds of inappropriate doubts and questionings about God, other human beings, and the various situations in which we find ourselves. The plural here “has the advantage of giving a wide range to the admonition” (Schrenk, 98). It “describes useless, and sometimes ill-natured, disputing and doubting” (Barclay, 43).

Both Silva (144) and O’Brien think the complaints are against their leaders [perhaps the bishops and deacons in 1:2] but are “tantamount to quarrelling against God (cf. Ex. 17:1-7). If so, then the word *guggusmoi* [and *dialogismon*] have a manward reference, but with an ultimate theological orientation – they are grumblings against God” (292).

The connection from the past is clear enough. “As God’s people they should learn from the mistakes of their spiritual ancestors. Israel murmured in the desert and suffered a fearful punishment. The Philippians should, in fear and trembling, not presume upon their salvation but instead take measures to quell the dissension

in their midst” (Thielman, 139).

These words may be an intended prelude to his later comments to Eudia and Syntche (4:2), even though they would clearly apply to any disruptions, divisions, or discord among the congregation. V. 15: “in order that you may definitely demonstrate yourselves blameless and innocent children of God, faultless in the middle of a crooked generation, being in a condition of distortions in which you shine as stars in the world”

The aim or purpose (*hina*) of avoiding “murmurings and disputings” is to demonstrate before the world of wickedness that you yourselves have a definitely different sense of being from them. As children of God, that sense of being is:

1. “blameless” (*amemptoi*) means “to be free from accusation or blame, from either the side of God or of human beings” (O’Brien, 292); “faultless” (Vine, 132); “free from censure” (Robertson, 447); free from “the judgment of others” (Muller, 94) – conduct wise.

2. “innocent” (*akeraioi*) means “nothing in their hearts and their motives that ought not to be there” (Lenski, 802); “unmixed, unadulterated” (Robertson, 447); this denotes one’s inner disposition of sincerity – character wise.

Taken together, these terms indicate that “no one would be able to lay any accusation or blame against them because they were pure and sincere” (O’Brien, 292/293).

3. “faultless” (*amoma*) means “unblemished in reputation and in reality” (Vincent, 439). This word means “undamaged” (Lenski, 802) by contact with the “crooked generation.”

These three terms are indicated “*as far as evil is concerned*” (BAG, 29).

The word “crooked” (*skolias*) occurs only three other times in the NT: Lk. 3:5; Ac. 2:40; 1 Pt. 2:18. It denotes “what is morally crooked, perverse, froward [in contrast to good], of people belonging to a particular generation” (Vine, 258).

The verb “being in a condition of distortions” (*diestramenes*) is a perfect tense, passive voice participle which indicates the state of being or condition in which this crooked generation finds itself. The word means “‘having a twist’ in the inner nature” (Kennedy, 442); “people who do not keep straight, who hold wrong views, who follow a distorted way of life, deviating from the norms contained in the Word of God” (Muller, 94).

To designate the Philippian Christians as those who “shine as stars in the world” is an appropriate way to define them since this is in conjunction with Jesus’ own words about His followers in Mt. 5:14 and Himself in Jn. 1:4; 8:12. As Robertson suggests, “the place for light is the darkness where it is needed”

(47) and the description of the “crooked” and “distorted” generation in this verse certainly and clearly indicates such need.

V. 16: “Holding fast/forth [the] Word [which gives] life, my ground for exultation in [the] day of Christ, that I did not run in vain nor toil in vain”

The word *epechontes* may be translated in two primary different ways:

1. To show *how* the readers will “shine” – by their missionary and evangelistic efforts to the corrupt world: “holding forth” (KJV), “offering to” (Twentieth Century NT), “proffering to it” (The New Jerusalem Bible), “proffer” (NEB), “carry into” (The Message), “offer them” (Contemporary English Version), “to hold out to others, to hold forth” (Muller, 94); “*to hold towards, hold forth, present*: as a light, by which illumined ye are the lights of the world” (Thayer, 231).

2. To show *how* the readers will “shine” - by their faithful adherence to “the word of life through their sincere disposition and exemplary conduct” (Muller, 95): “holding fast” (NASB, RSV, The New Berkeley Version), “holding out” (Weymouth), “cling to” (Beck, New Evangelical Translation), “hold up” (Williams), “hold out/on to” (NIV), “hold in your hands” (Phillips), “hold tightly to” (New Living Translation), “hold firmly to” (Contemporary English Version); “holding fast” (Robertson, 447); “*to have or hold upon, apply, to observe, attend to*” (Thayer, 231).

The idea here is not that they communicate the gospel in missionary or evangelistic fashion but “that they remain true to its light” (Stagg, 199).

O’Brien maintains that “‘hold fast’ is preferable and the general context of 1:27-2:18 has to do with standing firm in the faith against the attacks of external opponents” (297). Plus, the remaining part of this verse also tends to support this preference. Their faithful tenacity or firmness in the faith will avoid any “shame or regret that his work at Philippi had failed” (Ibid.; Kennedy, 443). The metaphor of a foot-race lends priceless value to Paul’s emphases. The word “run” (*edramon*) means “to exert oneself, make an effort; speed on, make progress.” [Paul uses this term in Rom. 9:16; 1 Cor. 9:24, 26; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; 2 The. 3:1.]

The word “toil” (*ekopiasa*) means “to work, work hard, labor.” This is the only occurrence of this word in Philippians. [Paul uses it elsewhere: Rom. 16:6, 12; 1 Cor. 4:12; 15:10; 16:16; Gal. 4:11; Eph. 4:28; Col. 1:29; 1 The. 5:12; 1 Tim. 4:10; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:6.]

Again, the Philippians themselves will be “proof to show that he

ran well, and that his hard training had not been wasted” (Scott, 66).

V. 17: “But even if I am giving my life in sacrifice as an act of offering and worshipful service of your faith, I personally am rejoicing and rejoice together with you all”

Williams translates: “Yes, even if I am pouring out my life as a libation on the sacrifice and service your faith is rendering. Paul’s terminology here shifts to a practice which was common among heathen nations. Various kinds of sacrificial offerings to the gods were designed to appease or satisfy them so as to gain or maintain their favor for personal and community benefits. As a type of secondary offering, *libation offerings* were drink-offerings of wine, water, or other liquids to be drunk. Some of these, such as wine, was a substitute for blood.

Paul, of course, had experienced many beatings and death-threats and knew that at any moment some mob or court could either kill or have him killed. If such transpired, his death should be viewed as a type of libation offering. That is, the outpouring of his life should be regarded as a secondary offering “to the primary sacrificial service of the Philippians, a sacrificial offering of themselves arising out of their faith, their trust or commitment to Christ” (Stagg, 199-200).

So, Paul is saying that even if he dies a martyr’s death, his “life-blood would be a libation poured upon their offering, a double sacrifice” (Mounce, 767). Instead of a doom and gloom reaction to this prospect, he says it fills him with *joy*, as it should them.

V. 18: “And likewise, you rejoice and should rejoice together with me”

The word “likewise” (*to de auto*) means “in the same way” (Moule, 34). That is, “they were to adopt the same outlook and join their rejoicing with his” (Mounce, 767).

As if to underscore this remarkable truth, and to positively stress this *suitable agreement in purpose* (2:12-18), he repeats that “to him every call to sacrifice and to toil was a call to his love for Christ, and therefore he met it not with regret and complaint but with joy” (Barclay, 46).

As noted in the Introduction (p. 1) and *Thematic Testimonies* (p. 2), one of the subsequent themes of Philippians is “joy.” The following sets forth, again, this emphasis with **bold print** to highlight the connection in verses 17 and 18:

chara (“joy, gladness”) – 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1 . . . *chario* (“re-
joyce”) – 1:18 [twice]; **2:17, 18**, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10 . . .
sugchairo (“rejoyce with”) - **2:17, 18**.

d. Strategically Ambitious for Service (2:19-30)

In this section, Paul examples two who are selflessly and strategically ambitious for service: Timothy (2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

1. Timothy⁶

V. 19: “Now I am hoping in the Lord Jesus to shortly send Timothy to you in order that I may also be encouraged when I learn of your condition”

The verb “I am hoping” is in the present tense and indicates confidence or “certain expectation” (O’Brien, 316), not some remote or cross-fingered possibility which may or may not eventuate. After all, this certain expectation is anchored “in the Lord Jesus.” This is the second (1:14) occurrence of the phrase “in the Lord.” That is, the sphere in which his plan to send Timothy circulates is none other than that of divine surety or the will of God.

The word “shortly” (*tacheos*) will be used again in v. 24. It is an adverb (a word of manner) and may be translated “quickly, at once, soon.” [It occurs elsewhere in the NT: Lk. 14:21; 16:6; Jn. 11:31; 1 Cor. 4:19; Gal. 1:6; 2 The. 2:2; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 4:9.] In v. 23, he uses an equivalent term, *exautes*, which will be examined in that verse, and more pointedly reveals the reason why there may be some delay in sending Timothy.

The word “I may be encouraged” (*eupsucho*) occurs only here in the NT. It means “*be glad, have courage*” (BAG, 330); “*to be of a cheerful spirit*” (Thayer, 264); “signifies to be of good comfort (*eu*, well, *psyche*, the soul)” (Vine, 210); “cheerful, of good spirit” (Robertson, 448); “good courage” (Henry Alford); “be at ease” (*The New Testament According to the Eastern Texts*, George M. Lamsa); “find comfort” (Silva, 155).

In other words, Paul not only wanted the Philippians to be en-

⁶ The name Timothy is mentioned 24 times in the NT: Acts 16:1 (with Paul in Philippi); 17:14, 15 (in Berea); 18:5 (with Paul in Corinth); 19:22 (in Macedonia); 20:4 (in Macedonia); Rom. 16:21 (Paul’s fellow-worker); 1 Cor. 4:17 (Paul’s beloved and faithful child in the Lord); 16:10 (fellow-worker); 2 Cor. 1:1 (brother), 19 (fellow-preacher); Phi. 1:1 (servant of Jesus); 2:19 (Paul’s associate); Col. 1:1 (brother); 1 The. 1:1 (Paul’s associate); 3:2 (fellow Christian worker), 6 (Paul’s messenger); 2 The. 1:1 (Paul’s associate); 1 Tim. 1:2 (Paul’s true child in the faith), 18 (Paul’s associate); 6:20 (Paul’s associate); 2 Tim. 1:2 (Paul’s beloved son); Phile. 1 (Paul’s brother); Heb. 13:23 (brother, released from prison).

couraged about his condition or situation but also that he himself would be encouraged by learning more fully about their condition or state of affairs.

V. 20: “for I have no one like-minded, who shall be genuinely concerned about you”

The reason for Paul’s positive perspective regarding Timothy is here declared. In doing so, he uses a word which occurs only here in the NT: “like-minded” (*isopsuchon*). It “states a resemblance” (Eadie, 148); “kindles the same emotions, Timothy’s care was equal to his own” (Beet, 82); “the quality of Timothy’s care for them is just that which marks Paul’s care for them . . . a fatherly way” (Vincent, 73).

That way is defined in/with the word “genuinely” (*gnesios*) which occurs here only in the NT. It denotes “that genuineness of feeling which befits the relationship between the apostle [and Timothy] and his converts” (Elliott, 70). His concern is not plastic, pretense, put on, or artificial. It is an authentic, “genuine concern for the Philippians’ well-being” (O’Brien, 319).

V. 21: “For they all strive for their own interests or advantages, not those of Jesus Christ”

As to whom the word “all” covers is not sufficiently clear to warrant a dogmatic statement. In *Word Biblical Commentary*, Gerald F. Hawthorne offers possibilities (110-111), as does Peter T. O’Brien (321) in *New International Greek Testament Commentary*. But as Vincent notes, “without more information a satisfactory explanation seems impossible” (74).

Regardless of their exact identity, the characterization of them is clear enough: “their own interests/advantages” (*ta heauton*).

As already mentioned in 1:15, 17, not everyone who preaches the gospel does so with “the highest of motives” (O’Brien, 321). But as Paul here states with confidence, he knew of no one who was as free from self-centredness as was his brother, child of faith, and associate named Timothy.

V. 22: “But you know of his proven character, that as a child with [his] father he served with me in the gospel”

The word “proven character” (*dokimen*) refers to “his approved worth, his sterling character. They have learned by experience his loyalty and love. They remember how severely at Philippi he had been tried and how nobly he had survived the ordeal” (Erdman, 98). His devotion and sacrificial service to and with

Paul was unmistakable. Paul compares it to a respectable child in relationship to reverence for his/her parent. In the words of William Barclay,

Timothy's great value was that he was always willing to go anywhere; and in his hands a message was as safe as if Paul had delivered it himself. Others might be consumed with selfish ambition; but Timothy's one desire was to serve Paul and Jesus Christ. He is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve. (48)

V. 23: "him, then, I hope to send as soon as I know my situation"

Again, as noted in v. 19, Paul now uses another word to indicate a reason for the delay in sending Timothy. The word "immediately" (*exautes*) is qualified by his lingering uncertainty about his own situation, as the rest of this verse demonstrates. Paul is not trying to be wishy-washy in sending Timothy but several factors were somewhat complicating such plans: an impending trial which may lead to acquittal or execution; "legal processes related to the trial" (O'Brien, 326-327); and any other kind of uncertainty "which surrounds the whole prospect" (Kennedy, 445). Again, as to exactly what Paul means, and "to what special matters he alludes is uncertain, but it is evident that he was looking for some immediate change in his condition, for better or for worse" (Pidge, 37).

The word "know" (*aphido*) means "to look away, to exclude everything else and concentrate on the one matter" (Scott, 69). It "gives the sense of looking *away* from the present condition of affairs to what is going to turn out" (Vincent, 441).

The only occurrence of this word in the NT is Heb. 12:2.

V. 24: "and I am confident in the Lord that I myself shall also come soon"

The word "confident" (*pepoitha*) is in the perfect tense which denotes a state of settled assurance or trust. Paul, like all, "was subject to changing currents of thought but his trust was always in the Lord" (Caffin, 63). He realizes that all depends upon God as to how, when, what, and where all plans develop. His confidence is "in the Lord" – the third occurrence (1:14; 2:19) of this phrase in Philippians.

Nevertheless, in the interim, Paul proceeds with assurance that his deliverance will transpire so that he "not only can send the

joyful news of his acquittal, but can come in person to bring comfort and gladness to the hearts of his friends” (Erdman, 99).

2. Epaphroditus⁷

Here the tone of Paul’s comments about the reason for sending back Epaphroditus to the Philippians is absolutely different or distinct from his reason for sending back Timothy.

V. 25: “I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister of my need”

Here a five-fold characterization of the value of Epaphroditus is pitched: the first three for Paul and the last two for the Philippians.

(1) “brother” (*adelphos*) denotes a fellow believer in the Christian faith.

(2) “fellow-worker” (*sunergos*) denotes ‘exerted energy’ in behalf of and/or in relation to the Christian cause). Or, “one who had labored for the cause and suffered for it” (Scott, 69). [The word appears elsewhere in the NT: Rom. 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 1:24; 8:23; Col. 4:11; 1 The. 3:2; Philemon 1, 24; 3 Jn. 8.]

(3) “fellow-soldier” (*sustratiotes*) denotes “in the fight against the powers of the Evil One and the enemies of the cross” (Muller, 101). It indicates “common danger as in Philemon 1” (Robertson, 449). BAG suggest “*comrade in arms*, only fig. of those who devote themselves to the service of the gospel” (803).

Thus, he and Paul “have shared in a common will, a common work, and a common warfare” (Knight, 330).

(4) “messenger” (*apostolos*) “does not denote the special office of apostle as held by the twelve, but is the general name and designation of a person sent or commissioned as delegate of the church” (Muller, 101). This is the word usually translated “apostle.” Paul chose this word apparently because it had “a special meaning to Christian ears. This man had been ‘sent out,’ in the service not only of the Philippian church, but of Christ himself” (Scott, 69).

(5) “minister” (*leitourgos*) occurs only here in Philippians but is found elsewhere in the NT: Rom. 13:6; 15: 16; Heb. 1:7; 8:2. It carries the idea of “a public servant and for a religious sense” (Moulton and Milligan, 373) or sacred or priestly service (BAG,

⁷ The name Epaphroditus is mentioned only 2 times in the NT and both in this letter: Phi. 2:25; 4:18. “This is the man, mentioned only here in the New Testament, who had conveyed to Paul a gift of money from the Philippian congregation (4:18)” (Knight, 330).

472). It indicates “the idea of [his] gift as being a sacrifice, an oblation to God” (Kennedy, 446). It may denote that “he had also helped him by his counsel and sympathy and companionship” (Scott, 69).

V. 26: “because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you heard that he became sick”

The verb “he was longing” (*epipothon*) is a periphrastic imperfect tense and denotes continuous or incomplete action in past time (Dana and Mantey, 187). Robertson translates, “he was yearning after” (449).

The verb “was distressed” (*ademonon*) means “*not at home, to be troubled, distressed*” (Thayer, 11). It indicates anxiety “because the saints at Philippi had received news of his sickness” (Vine, 550; Wiesinger, 87). Thus, the KJV translates, “full of heaviness”; the RSV and ASV translate, “sore troubled”; “feeling troubled” (Beck); “homesick” (Williams).

Thielman suggests,

There is no need to make light of Epaphroditus’s longing as mere ‘homesickness’ [as does Collange, 120 and Barth, 88]. Paul uses the same term to describe his own desire to see the Philippians in 1:8, and such expressions of longing for those at home are not unknown in other letters from this period. Epaphroditus had endured a life-threatening illness in order to complete his commission from the Philippian church (vv. 27, 30). Somehow the church had heard of this illness, and Epaphroditus was understandably distressed. Compassion dictated that he be released from his responsibility to care for Paul’s needs and be sent home with Paul’s blessing. (153)

V. 27: “For he was sick almost to the point of death; but God had mercy on him, and not only him but me also, in order that I may not have sorrow upon sorrow”

The word “almost” (*paraplesion*) means “nearly,” and occurs here only in the NT. Apparently, his health had deteriorated to a most dangerous point and “his life hung in the balance for a while” (Silva, 161). He had risked his life for the sake of fulfilling his mission to the Philippians (v. 30).

God had mercy “by restoring health and life” (Bengel, 438). The phrase “sorrow upon sorrow” means that Paul did not have to experience Epaphroditus’ sickness or his death.

Is this reference to deliverance from “sorrow upon sorrow” a note of sadness? Absolutely not. In fact, it brought about additional “joy,” a second theme of this letter. Anyway, it is typically true and/or common that when a friend or relative dies, tears are shed. These tears, however, are not in conflict with and do not permanently displace one’s “joy in the Lord” (Lenski, 822).

V. 28: “Therefore, I am sending him all the more eagerly in order that you may rejoice again when you see him and that I may be less sorrowful”

The words “all the more eagerly” are actually one word in the original text (*spoudaioteros*) and is “a comparative with superlative force” (Kennedy, 447; Blass, 33). This haste or eagerness is to reduce the anxiety which his absence and sickness have spawned in the Philippians. That is, “in so far as the anxiety of the Philippians concerning Epaphroditus is *sorrow* to the apostle, it ceases so soon as they again rejoice” (Wiesinger, 88).

The word “less sorrowful” (*alupoteros*) occurs here only in the NT. It does not imply the removal of “all” sorrow but only that Paul’s sorrow will be “less.” “The sorrow caused by his captivity and from being surrounded by adversaries still remained” (O’Brien, 340).

V. 29: “Therefore, receive him in [the] Lord with all joy and hold those like him in honor”

Paul issues a command that Epaphroditus be received with all the joy and honor which he deserved, as if they were receiving the Lord Himself. This is the fourth occurrence (1:14; 2:19, 24) of the phrase “in the Lord” in this letter.

“Indeed, Epaphroditus deserves more than a joyful welcome: the Philippians should ‘[continue to] hold people like him in the highest honour’ (O’Brien, 341).

V. 30: “because he came near death for the work of Christ, hazarding his life to fully discharge what was lacking in your service to me”

The word “hazarding” (*paraboleusamenos*) occurs here only in the NT. It means to “*have no concern for one’s life*” (BAG, 618); “*one who rashly exposes himself to danger, to be venturesome; to expose one’s life boldly, jeopard life, hazard life*” (Thayer, 479); “to risk, to gamble, to stake” (Muller, 103);

“a gambler’s word, *to throw down a stake*” (Vincent, 442). After all, “the brotherhoods of the ancient Church, who cared for the sick at the risk of their lives, were called *parabolani* or *reckless persons*” (Ibid).

It was this type of service which Epaphroditus “could now supplement and complete by his presence and personal care for the apostle. Such self-forgetful work of charity, wrought even at the risk of his own health, was indeed a sacred ministry and consecrated service” (Muller, 103).

He did what they could not do due to their separation. So, “Paul highly recommends him, perhaps to silence any possible complaint that Epaphroditus had been unfaithful or that he was a quitter” (Brooks, 31).

When the two examples of being *strategically ambitious for service* in this section of scripture are considered – Timothy and Epaphroditus – they are but following in the footsteps of Jesus and Paul in displaying “the unselfconscious care for others” (Bruce, 73). ““They served Christ by serving people. We, too, serve Christ by ministering to others” (Robbins, 88).

e. Surrendered Acceptance of Righteousness (3:1-11)

v. 1: “Furthermore, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome for me and provides security for you”

The word “furthermore” (*To loipon*) may be translated “finally” (KJV, NASB, Williams) or “in conclusion” (AV, RSV, NIV) but it should not be regarded as a note that he is about to complete or end his letter. It is best understood to mean that he is continuing his writing with new or expanded information. So, “furthermore” or “well then” or “moreover” or “in this connection” may be regarded as less likely to give a false impression that he is about to wrap up things. Bengel notes that it is “a phrase used in continuing a discourse” (439).

The words “my brothers” (*adelphoi mou*) is a common NT term in referring to a fellow believer or Christian.

The word “rejoice” or “joy”, as noted in the Introduction on p. 1 and 2, is the second theme of this letter: *chara* (“joy, gladness”) – 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1 . . . *chario* (“rejoice”) – 1:18 [twice]; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10 . . . *sugchairo* (“rejoice with”) – 2:17, 18.

This is not an admonition to some kind of superficial cheerfulness that closes its eyes to the surrounding circumstances. Rather, the apostle is inculcating [teaching]

a positive Christian attitude of joy that finds outward expression in their lives and that realistically takes into account the adverse circumstances, trials, and pressures through which the Philippians were called to pass. It also recognizes God's mighty working in and through those circumstances to fulfill his own gracious purposes in Christ. (O'Brien, 349)

Plus, "the proper principle of rejoicing is given presently, namely, to be in communion with Christ" (Bengel, 439) – that is, "in the Lord" – in union with Him or in the sphere of His influencing presence. This is the fifth occurrence (1:14; 2:19, 24, 29) of this phrase in Philippians. This provides the motive and domain of victorious joy. This stands true despite outward circumstances of difficulties which could ordinarily, apart from Him, squelch, abolish, nullify, devour, decimate, tear to bits, overturn, or shatter such joy.

Then, with a somewhat irregular twist, rather than a first person singular verb "I write" or "I am writing" to you, Paul's word "to write" (*graphein*) is a "*Personal Construction with the Infinitive* and is also used in Lu. 2:26; 16:22; Heb. 9:26" – thus, rare in the NT (Robertson, 1085). Nevertheless, this was an exceedingly impressive grammatical move when it comes to alerting his Philippian friends of his intention to share some needed information in *writing*.

The expression "the same things to you" has been much debated over the years. Without detailing those debates, there appears to be three realistic possibilities as to what he means by those words:

1. His oft-repeated exhortations to rejoice (1:25; 2:18, 28, 29).
2. His following discussion on "warnings and directives conveyed *orally* by Epaphroditus (2:25-30) about the 'dogs' (3:2) and those who claim too much for themselves (3:12-16)" (O'Brien, 351-352).
3. His putting in writing the things he told them in person while he and Timothy were in Philippi (Acts 16). This view may be aided by Paul's own comments in 3:18: "For many walk, of whom *I often told you*" – obviously when he was there in person. So, to now "write the same things to you" seems accurate enough to favor this position. Plus, to say that putting these things in writing "provides security for you" (*humin asphales*) seems to seal the deal.

The word "security" (*asphales* – Ac. 21:34; 22:30; 25:26; Heb. 6:19 only in the NT) comes from the word *sphallo* ("to trip up") and the *a* before it is an alpha-privative which negates the meaning of the word – thus, "not to trip up, safe, provide security" (Vine, 993). Schmidt (506) says it means "to make firm or certain";

Thayer (82) suggests “suited to confirm”; and BAG (118), “*safe course for you.*”

The expression “not troublesome to me” (*emoi men ouk akneron*) is a negative way of stating a positive truth: in writing these words, it fills Paul with superlative joy because “spiritual joy produces the best security against errors” (Bengel, 439). Indeed, “repeated warning [this time in writing] can prevent our losing sight of the danger and rouses us to continuous watchfulness . . . It prevents negligence and thus promotes safety” (Greijdanus quoted by Silva, 105).

V. 2: “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilators”

The word “beware” (*blepete*) is a present tense imperative which is repeated before each of following objects and may also be translated “look out” (Williams, Beck); “watch out” (NIV); “be on your guard against” (Phillips); “take heed” (Thayer, 103). It indicates a sense of urgency or something of compelling importance. It is “used by way of warning to take heed against an object” (Vine, 126). The object/s in this case are noted by the following words. The words “dogs, evil, and mutilators” are translated from three Greek words which begin with the letter “k” –

kunos (‘dogs’) – *kakous* (‘evil’) – *katatomen* (‘mutilators’).

It is not absolutely clear if these are three separate groups of people who are against the surrendered acceptance of righteousness or if these are three different ways to characterize the same group of people. However, it is likely or even certain that the third word “mutilators” (*kataomen* – the only occurrence of this word in the NT) refers to “Judaizing Christians⁸, or Gentile proselytes circumcised later in life” (O’Brien, 354).

The word “dogs” (*kunos*) occurs 4 other times in the NT: Mt. 7:6; Lk. 16:21; 2 Pt. 2:22; Re. 22:15. In Mt. 7:6, for example, the word “is a figure of speech in which men who oppose the Gospel are compared to animals recognized to be unclean, Paul describes specific Jewish or Judaizing opponents as ‘dogs’ and their scorning of the message rather than ignorance of it” (Michel, 1103).

They were “unwilling to be the Israel of God” (Bengel, 440).

This was one of the terms by which the Jews referred to Gentiles since they were regarded by the Jews as unclean, unholy, “indicating that they were hardly to be recognized as human beings” (Scott, 73).

Paul, therefore, turns the tables on these Judaizers and notes that

⁸ These were “Christians of Jewish background who were determined to hold on to everything in Judasim and merely add Christianity to it. They insisted that Gentiles had to be circumcised and otherwise keep the Jewish law in order to be saved” (Brooks, 31).

from the viewpoint of the Christian faith, they themselves who were against the surrendered acceptance of righteousness were the actual “dogs.”

The second term “evil workers” (*kakous ergatas*) denotes those whose pursuit of “righteousness” was based on their “works or efforts” which are self-centered. “To improve self-centeredness, educate it, and enlighten it, to make it behave by imposing restrictions upon it, cannot really change its nature. However respectable, educated, and powerful self-interest becomes, it remains a corrupting and defeating factor in human life simply because it was never meant to be complete in itself” (Wicks, 73-74). It always resists the surrendered acceptance of righteousness on the basis of one’s obedient-based kind of faith in God through Jesus Christ.

Again, the third term, as noted earlier, is surely “the mutilators” (*kataomen*) or the “Judaizing Christians, or Gentile proselytes circumcised later in life” (O’Brien, 354) who insisted on circumcision as a necessary prerequisite to or in addition to the Christian faith. Paul declares that “bodily circumcision was now useless, nay hurtful” (Bengel, 440) in relation to the Christian faith.

So, when viewed in a collective manner, the verb “beware of” constitutes a severe denouncement, disapproval, denunciation, and scathing disowning of the claims of the Jewish-oriented opposition to obedient-based kind of faith.

V. 3: “For we are the circumcision, those who are worshipping by [the] Spirit of God and taking pride in Christ Jesus and living in a state of no confidence in the flesh”

In stark contrast to “the mutilators,” Paul defines what true circumcision (*peritome*) really is. He does so by means of three participle phrases:

(1) “worshipping by the Spirit of God” – Worship is the experience of experiencing the presence of God in which we ascribe ultimate worth and value to God; the rendering of appreciation to God; both speaking with and hearing God’s response. [For a broader look at the subject of worship, see my article, *Worship: Practical Pointers or Perspectives* in my website:

archive.org/details/@mandm313.

David Matthews, former pastor of First Church, Greenville, S.C. says, “Worship is essentially entertainment in many settings, particularly those that are televised. We must rescue worship from show business where the sole goals are to keep attendance up and the room full. The test of worship is not the degree of emotional expression or the number of people there.. Worship is the otherness and the nearness of God. We have almost lost

our sense of the otherness of God that gives us a sense of awe. It has become the ‘deadest hour.’”⁹

(2) “taking pride in Christ Jesus” – Paul used a noun form [*kauchema*] of this verb [*kauchaomai* “taking pride” in 1:26; 2:16. It avoids the pride of oneself and one’s achievements; it does not boast in whatever external badges or certificates or recognition ceremonies in which one was the Top Prize. Rather, the pride or boast which identifies oneself as having a circumcised heart takes place solely and exclusively “in Christ Jesus.”

⁹ *Ecclesiastical Entertainment* by Larry G. Jackson: “Since the average church goer is living in pretense and has no appetite for real religion [Christianity] it has been necessary to make some adjustments. Instead of dedicated worship and sacrificial service, we have what might be called *ecclesiastical entertainment*. Our religious services are dedicated to the amusement of the assembled adherents . . . Today’s sophisticated church-goer can shop through the religious page of his Friday paper and find out what will be playing in the various churches on Sunday. It will be noticed that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the religious page and the amusement page. On the religious page it can be noticed what Gospel celebrities are in town and where they are appearing. A church is very fortunate to have a guest appearance by a Gospel celebrity. These celebrities usually appear in exchange for the privilege of plugging their latest record, books, or religious trinkets. . . . Broken down entertainers who couldn’t make it in show business have found that by giving their act a religious veneer, they have a ready market in the churches. Everything from magicians to broncobusters are on the church circuit. The pay isn’t good but it is getting better. Preachers have retaliated by entering the entertainment field with religious acts. . . . Every successful religious show must have a ‘name’ attraction. These stars must be well traveled, well known, and have good reviews. These reviews are important. They reveal what kind of crowds the star has attracted, how many converts he has had, how much money he can raise, etc. A Gospel celebrity is very jealous about his reviews. They are his bread and butter. These reviews are important and since they are generally written by the performer himself there develops a slight tendency to exaggerate. These reviews will sometimes speak of crowds of several thousands attending in an auditorium with less than eight hundred seats! . . . The big demand today is for good singing groups. Family singing groups are particularly popular. Most of these groups have successfully modernized the old time religion. They keep up with the latest trends, styles, and fashions of the entertainment world and add just enough religious flavor to get by. These groups have the same hair styles, dress, music, and manners of any other rock and roll group but they know how to sprinkle their songs with choice, standard, religious phrases. . . . Today’s successful religious service has become a carefully produced theatrical product designed for the delight of the church audience. This entertainment might range from operatic arias to country and western hoedowns, from Shakespeare to cheap vaudeville acts, but entertainment it is . . . nothing more. Audience participation shows are also popular. Fun and games for everyone. Prizes galore and everybody has a chance to win. Everybody sing. It’s not raining on the inside. Game shows come in for a big play. Contests are always big. Participation and competition are tried and proven winners. . . . The Sunday morning floorshow will regularly feature the same basic format: a good musical program, guest celebrities, a stand-up comic, and a good master of ceremonies who must also excel in extracting money. A news commentator with religious overtones is always good. All this must run smoothly and fit neatly in the allotted time. . . . This association of religious truth with mere entertainment has so cheapened the truth that no one takes it anymore seriously than they do the patter of a nightclub comic. . . . If what we want is entertainment let’s be honest enough to call it that and quit trying to disguise it as religion. In general, religion has become a big business with hallelujah hucksters peddling packaged piety and bargain blessings. Our ministers have become merchants of morality who *spend their time promoting instead of preaching*. The latest selling methods are employed and religion finds itself commercialized and dispensed in convenient, easy-to-take capsules. . . . My problem in all this is that I find NONE of it in the Bible. If these preachers of these churches can’t preach, why don’t they confess their mistake to the Divine Call and quit! Also, if this is all a church wants, why doesn’t it just confess that it is a social club and take the name ‘Church’ off of it! Our problem today is that we have a lot buildings that are called churches that are not, and a lot of men who call themselves preachers of the Word who are not. GOD FORBID!!!”

This taking pride or boasting or “glorying is that of confidence, joy and thanksgiving, and the paradox is that the one who glories thus looks away from himself, so that his glorying is a confession of God” (Bultmann, 647).

(3) “living in a state of no confidence in the flesh” – The perfect tense of the verb *pepoithotes* is what places this feature in a state or condition of being. Paul used this same tense in 1:6, 11, 14, 16, 25; 2:15, 24.

The word “flesh” (*sarki*) is used with a variety of meanings in the NT: (1) physical flesh; (2) a human being; (3) physical kinship; (4) sinful desires; (5) etc. Here, it refers to the “‘self,’ the works of the ‘old nature,’ on which man sometimes puts his trust: physical, intellectual, spiritual, ceremonial works and privileges which are carnal and which stand in contrast with the Spirit of God and His works” (Muller, 108).

In verses 4-11, Paul portrays himself as an example of one who formerly had confidence in the flesh [4-6] but who abandoned it as the active means for obtaining righteousness and experienced instead the surrendered acceptance of righteousness by faith [7-11].

V. 4: “although I myself have confidence in [the] flesh. If another thinks he has confidence in [the] flesh, I have more”

The conjunction “although” together with the verb “have confidence” is known as a “concessive construction” (Robertson, 1129) indicating *something allowed for the sake of argument*. An terse review of his former grounds for boasting are now dangled before his readers in verses 5-6:

V. 5: “circumcision on the eight day – an Israelite by birth – of the tribe of Benjamin – a Hebrew of Hebrews – according to the law a Pharisee”

Paul here confesses that he possessed credentials which served as the basis of intense loyalty to religious endeavors and which exceeded, perhaps, anyone else. He stood tall above others without equal or competition.

(1) “circumcision on the eight day” – This was in accordance with the command of God to Abraham: “He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you” (Gen. 17:12) and was regarded as a permanent practice in Israel (Lev. 12:3). Thus, “he had been born into the Jewish faith and had known its privileges and observed its ceremonies since his birth” (Barclay, 57).

(2) “an Israelite by birth” – That is, he was a descendant of the

patriarch Jacob – “not a proselyte” (Robertson, 452). So, this stressed the most absolute form of purity.

(3) “of the tribe of Benjamin” - This was the topmost of the uppermost; the elite of the aristocracy; the tribe from which had come the first king of Israel; the tribe which refused to revolt under Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:21).

(4) “a Hebrew of Hebrews” – His parents were Hebrews and he still spoke the Hebrew language and other Jewish cultural practices which had not been contaminated by Hellenistic or Greek practices and influences.

(5) “according to the law a Pharisee” – The Pharisees were *separated ones* from the common affairs of life and devoted themselves entirely to the rigorous and meticulous observance of the Law, including belief in the resurrection (Acts. 23:6) which, among other things, distinguished them from another group of influential Jews known as the Sadducees (the wealthy upper class involved with the priesthood, accepting only the first five books of scripture, etc).

V. 6: “with reference to zeal, persecuting the church, with reference to righteousness, having become blameless in the law”

(6) “with reference to zeal, persecuting the church” – Zeal or zealousness was one of the most noble qualities by which the religious life was to be measured. So intense was his zeal to practice and promote the Jewish religion that it prompted him to persecute, with the intention to destroy or obliterate, the newly arrived religious sect called the Christian church. As one example, he was the primary proponent in the persecution of the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1-9:9).

(7) “with reference to righteousness, having become blameless in the law” – He broadly knew and consistently practiced all the rabbinic rules which would guarantee one’s salvation by the faithful keeping of divine law within the Torah or the first five books of Moses.¹⁰

When it came to testing the standards of righteousness within, determined and measured by the law’s requirements for righteousness, he regarded himself as justified before God. There was no demand of the law which he did not fulfil” (Barclay, 60). He had “omitted nothing and was blameless” (Knight, 334). The word “blameless” (*amemptos*) must be cautiously under-

¹⁰ “Rabbinic Judaism – that mode of Jewish religion created by the rabbis of the early centuries of the Common Era and eventually embodied in the laws and doctrines of the Talmud – is a single, seamless, all-encompassing religious structure, continuing in its classic form from its very beginnings to the present day. . . . The devotion of the Jews to study of the Torah is held by them to be their chief glory” (Neusner, 1, 9).

stood:

This does not mean that Paul thought of himself as sinless prior to his conversion, for his blamelessness would include careful attention to the means of atonement the law provided for those who sin. It means instead that his parents had done everything for him that the law required Jews to do and that he had himself diligently observed the law. Paul trusted that one day this heritage and these achievements would help him to stand acquitted before God. (Thielman, 170)

Despite the attractiveness of these seven features to the Jews, “substituting them for the gospel means trusting the flesh for salvation, and that can only end in disaster on the final day: (Thielman, 182).

V. 7: “But what things were gains to me, these I counted as loss for the sake of Christ”

Paul once regarded the outward privileges as advantages which were to be clasped and grasped as indispensable ways to gain favor with God. Now, however, he regards them as outward poisonous pitfalls which kept him away from Christ. The perfect tense of the verb “I counted” (*hegemai*) indicates a present state or condition of reality from which there is no change or variation. That is, he at some point regarded those advantages as worthless and harmful and still regards them as such since they stand in the way of one’s surrendered acceptance of righteousness.

The word “gains” is plural and the word “loss” is singular. As Pidge so sharply points out: “The plural suggests the various elements of gain which had grown up out of those high claims, while the singular hints that he lumps them all together as a single item of loss” (45). That is, the many “gains” are now dismissed with a single word: “loss” (*zemian*) For the sake of Christ, Paul trashed his former treasures. He punctured and pulverized his previous prizes for the sake of the precious person of Christ. As he will celebrate in v. 9, it is in Him that the righteousness he sought by means of the law is perfectly provided through faith in Him.

V. 8: “Rather, on the contrary, I count all things to be loss for the surpassing excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things and count them as dung, in order that I may gain Christ”

The words “Rather, on the contrary” (*alla menounge kai*) are a collection of forceful expressions to picture Paul’s radical break from his former cushions of security to his present condition of security in Christ Himself. That is, he is now amplifying and emphatically reinforcing what he said in v. 7.

The word “I count” (*hegoumai*) means that his thoughts are now expanded and directed in a different and constructive manner regarding “all” the previous prizes he possessed.

In fact, the word “all” means he is embracing “every conceivable claim and merit from a human standpoint” (Pidge, 45-46) and regarding them to be “loss” (*zemian*). None of them were really advantageous but were actual roadblocks and barriers to God.

The word he uses about those supposed privileged advantages is translated by the KJV as “dung” (*skubala* – which appears nowhere else in the NT). It is also translated “rubbish” (NASB, Goodspeed), “refuse” (Williams, Twentieth Century NT), “garbage” (Beck), “worth less than nothing” (Taylor).

The word refers to what “is hastily thrown away, as hereafter unworthy either to be touched or looked at” (Bengel, 441).

These formerly prized privileges are now viewed as “worthless and rejectable, unattractive and undesired, cast away from him for good” (Muller, 114). Just as “the seaman throws everything overboard in a storm to save his life, so Paul discarded every vestige of personal merit ‘on account of Christ’” (Knight, 335).

Whereas Paul noted seven losses in vs. 5-6, he now notes seven gains in vs. 8-11:

(1) “the surpassing excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord” – The word “surpassing excellence” (*huperechon*) means knowledge which is “of more value than before; be better than.” Christ within Himself is that excellency and when He is known, “the *knowledge of him* likewise obtains *excellency*” (Bengel, 441). So, “the knowledge” here is not simply an accumulation of additional information about Him but “close intimacy” (Robbins, 99) with Him. After all, to know Christ is to know God, and to know God is eternal life (John 17:3).

The words “of Jesus Christ my Lord” are emphatic. They note “his own experience of the Jesus who as Christ was crucified and of the Lord who had appeared to him and in whom he had lived for years” (Plummer, 73).

(2) “gain Christ” – This drastically changed his way of thinking. “Paul was never satisfied with his *knowledge of Christ* and always craved *more fellowship with him*” (Robertson, 453 – emphasis mine). Paul’s desire “is a fuller and fuller apprehension

and appreciation of Christ. There are treasures untold which he is eager to discover and to claim” (Erdman, 117) from being in union with Him.

As Kennedy notes (453):

There is nothing mechanical or fixed about fellowship with Christ. It may be interrupted by decay of zeal, the intrusion of the earthly spirit, the toleration of known sins, the easy domination of self-will, and countless other causes. Hence, to maintain it, there must be the continuous estimating of earthly things at their true value.

V. 9: “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law but through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God on the basis of faith”

(3) “righteousness” – It is not the self-brand kind of righteousness on the basis of efforts toward complete obedience to the law and strict fulfillment of all its requirements. Rather, the perfect God donated-brand of righteousness which may only be experienced through faith in Christ. [Compare my commentary on Romans for expanded perspectives on this kind of righteousness: archive.org/details/@mandm313.]

(4) “faith in Christ/on the basis of faith” – This is concrete opposition to human works or merits. Faith involves trust in God but primarily means to be united with Him. This is not “mere assent to testimony, a mental act separable from personal trust or reliance. The derived meaning of the word stresses the idea of personal reliance. It also involves distrust in self and trust only in Christ. Believers are united with Christ by God’s grace through faith” (Robbins, 101-102).

V. 10: “to know Him even the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”

(5) “the power of His resurrection” – The experiential knowledge of Christ embraces the power of “working out one’s own salvation” (2:12) in the process of sanctification.

The word “power” (*dunamis*) means “ability,” and this ability is anchored in Christ’s resurrection life (Rom. 1:4).

This involves the “spiritual transformation into the image of Christ – a transformation that takes place on an ongoing or durative basis – nothing instantaneous. As specified in 2 Cor. 5:18, it involves “beholding the glory of the Lord” (contemplation), “being changed into His likeness” (transformation), and

“from one degree of glory to another” (assimilation). Of course, “it is the mighty power of our Lord’s resurrection that maintains our faith in the future life strong and unwavering. Except for that, we should only guess and hope, or doubt and despair” (Pidge, 47).

(6) “the fellowship of His sufferings” – The word “fellowship” (*koinonian*) means joint-participation, sharing in, partnership in the Christian cause. And the process of spiritual growth, development, and transformation are not without pain and struggles. This process involves sufferings, struggles, and conflicts, just like it did during the earthly life of Jesus. As Silva points out (191):

The participation of believer’s in Christ’s death includes not only their definitive breach with sin (the main concern in Romans 6) but also those sufferings they undergo by virtue of their union with Christ. This latter idea seems to be the concern of Phil. 3:10. The connection between the apostle’s suffering and the Lord’s passion surfaces in Col. 1:24 and is prominent in 2 Cor. 4:10-12. This latter passage is significant in that Paul describes his own suffering as a ‘carrying about in our body the death [*nekrosin*] of Jesus. . . . For we who live are always being delivered over to death [*thanaton*] for Jesus’ sake. . . . So, death [*thanatos*] works in us (cf. also 1:9).

“The very essence of such fellowship is the conviction that God has put us into the furnace of affliction, as he did the Master, to prepare us for his glory . . . To suffer together creates a purer fellow-feeling than to labor together. Companionship in sorrow forms the most enduring of all ties” (Pidge, 47). The word “being conformed to his death” (*summophizomenos*) occurs only here in the NT. This involves “not merely undergoing physical death like Christ, but conformity to the spirit and temper, the meekness and submissiveness of Christ; to His unselfish love and devotion, and His anguish over human sin” (Vincent, 448).

V. 11: “in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead”

(7) “the resurrection of the dead” – Rather than referring to the general resurrection of all from the dead, it likely is restricted to

“the resurrection in glory in which only believers will share; the resurrection of the righteous, the resurrection to life and glory” (Muller, 118).

The word “attain” (*katanteso*) alludes to the Christian life as a “pilgrimage – arriving at the journey’s end” (Knight, 337). [Paul uses this word only three other times in the NT: 1 Co. 10:11; 14:36; Ep. 4:13.]

For Paul, “to attain unto this was to reach the fulfillment of all his highest and holiest hopes. What a glorious privilege it will be to rise out of the darkness of the tomb, clothed in a spiritual body which shall be a perfect abode for the immortal spirit, both body and spirit being freed from all sin and delivered forever from the curse under which we now groan” (Pidge, 48).

So, the Christian “looks ahead to the resurrection which must be understood as bodily, whatever the exact nature of that body is to be (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35-50)” (Stagg, 207).

Again, the primary thrust of this section of scripture (3:1-11) is surrendered acceptance of righteousness.

f. Standard Alternatives to Pursue (3:12-4:1)

V. 12: “[It is] not that I already attained or am already perfect but I am pursuing if I may reach it since I have already been reached by Christ Jesus”

Paul uses three different verbs in this one verse to express the single goal of *attainment/realization/obtaining*: v. 11 -“the resurrection” (Silva, 200) when his final redemption will occur: *elambon* (“I attained”) - *teteleiomai* (“perfect”) – *katalao* and *katelemophthre* (“reach”/“reached”). ““To be spiritually perfected”” (Ellicott, 88) will not be reached until then.

It was not the death of Jesus which arrested Paul’s attention but His resurrection. As Paul detailed in I Cor. 15, without the resurrection the death of Jesus means nothing. So, Paul pushes forward to that time when his perfection will be actualized: his own resurrection. Only then is when the ultimate redemption of our body will occur (Ro. 8:23) and perfection will be dressed in “blamelessness at the Day of Christ (1:10)” (Silva, 201).

Scott (88) frames the concept as follows:

What he desires is the final redemption, and Christ has laid hold of him for the one purpose that he may at last gain it. Paul never fails to insist that the action of Christ must precede any action of our own. We know as also we are known (I Cor. 13:12). We for-

give one another as we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32). All work that we do is made possible by the work of Christ on our behalf. So we can look forward to a full redemption because Christ has been before us and has determined that we should obtain it.

As Paul states, he has not attained perfection and so he pursues it with all the energy and ability which Christ gives him. As Wicks words it: “The continuous conviction of not having attained perfection is simply the sign that something which might be a part of us is knocking at our door when we are asleep. There is no limit to this ‘open life,’ provided we do not think we have attained it” (88).

Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus was not the end of his spiritual pursuit – only the beginning.

V. 13: “Brothers, I do not consider myself to have attained [spiritual perfection]; but one thing [is important]: on the one hand, forgetting what lies behind and on the other, stretching forward to what lies ahead”

This is the fifth occurrence in Philippians of the word “brothers” (1:12, 14; 2:25; 3:1). It will occur again in vs. 17; 4:1, 8, 21. The term denotes “affection; fellow believer.”

The word “consider” (*logizomai*) occurs one other time in this letter (4:8). Our English word “logic” comes from this word. It denotes what is considered sensible, rational, pragmatic, or logical, as far as thought patterns are concerned. The word “has the force of looking back on the process of a discussion and calmly drawing a conclusion” (Kennedy, 458).

[Paul uses this term 33 other times; its only other occurrences in the NT are: Mk. 11:31; 15:28; Lk. 22:37; Ac. 19:27; He. 11:19; Ja. 2:23; 1 Pt. 5:12.]

This verb uses the middle voice which “describes the subject as *participating in the results of the action*” (Dana and Mantey, 157). It “calls special attention to the subject” (Robertson, 804). So, Paul is but emphasizing that, as far as he himself is concerned, his growth and development in the Christian faith is still in motion – there has been no arrival point.

Indeed, the word “attained” [with the negative particle before the word “consider”] is a perfect tense verb which denotes that there is spiritual perfection is still being pursued. Therefore, “the not yet state of Christian perfection destroys complacency and demands strenuous pursuit” (Mounce, 772).

The two word expression *hen de* (“one thing”) indicates that what follows points to the essence of what is important in the

development and unfolding of Christian growth patterns. The verb “forgetting” (*epilanthanomenos*) occurs here only in Philippians. [It occurs elsewhere in the NT: Mt. 16:5; Mk. 8:14; Lk. 12:6; He. 6:10; 13:2, 16; Ja. 1:24.] In terms of a footrace, it pictures a runner who does not keep looking backward or over his shoulders to see where his competitors are or how much territory he has already run. Plus, this verb is in the present tense which signifies that his “forgetting” is an ongoing, continual, durative, continuous, ceaseless, unending process. The words “what lies behind” (*ta opiso*) refers to (1) all the advantages and privileges in which he previously luxuriated; and (2) “the portions of his Christian course already traversed” (Elliott, 90).

The verb “stretching forward” (*epekteinomenos*) is another present tense verb with the middle voice and signifies Paul’s urgent, intense desire and drive, as well as maximum efforts in “working out his own salvation” (2:12). This word “pictures a runner with his eyes fixed on the goal, his hand stretching out towards it, and his body bent forward as he enters the last and decisive stages of the race” (O’Brien, 429). Thus, “our homestretch” (Mounce, 772). This is the only occurrence of this word in the NT.

V. 14: “I am pursuing the goal concerning the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus”

This is the third occurrence (3:6, 12) of the verb “I am pursuing” (*dioko*) in Philippians, another present tense verb, denoting strenuous expenditures on Paul’s part but always in conjunction with the Holy Spirit Who makes such efforts effective.

The noun “the goal” (*skopon*) occurs here only in the NT. It depicts “the marker at the conclusion of the race upon which the runner fixes his gaze” (O’Brien, 430).

[The verb form of this word (*skopeo*) appeared in 2:4, and will occur again in 3:17.]

The noun “the prize” (*to brabeion*) occurs in the NT only here and 1 Cor. 9:24. It “is the culmination of the whole work of salvation – with all its implications – to which God has called us. That is the great hope that sustained Paul, even in the midst of discouragement and frustration” (Silva, 202).

Furthermore, this “prize” is identified as “the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

In other words, all the strenuous efforts and intense focus he has just mentioned is made possible by and in response to the “upward calling” (*ano kleseos*) of God. The word “upward” or “heavenly” means that the “calling” is from God and indi-

cates Paul's conscious awareness of and dependence upon God's grace as it is supremely and superlatively experienced in Christ Jesus.

Recall that the primary focus in this section of scripture is on the Godly *Standard Alternatives to Pursue* (3:12-4:1)

V. 15: "Therefore, let those who are mature keep on thinking this way. And if anyone may think differently, even this God shall reveal to you"

The word "mature" (*teleioi*) means in contrast to "a babe" (Knight, 340) or one who is childish – not childlike. This word likely refers to those he mentioned early in 3:3: "the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh." The phrase "keep on thinking this way" clearly connotes that "the only perfection possible to a Christian is to be always striving toward something better. To stand still, in the fancy that one has now reached the goal, is only stagnation, and proves that one is not yet truly a servant of Christ" (Scott, 92). "And if anyone may think differently, even this God shall reveal to you" – The word "differently" (*heteros*) appears here only in the NT. It is an adverb denoting "otherwise." In other words, for those whose mindset and thinking patterns are not in conjunction with these truths, his only viable option is to "turn such cases over to God. What else can he do with them?" (Robertson, 456).

In other words, if Paul's readers "are not quite convinced that this point of view should be applied to every area of life, God will reveal even this to you" (Mounce, 772).

Pidge suggests that there is a most practical lesson in these words: "We cannot always act or think alike, and in such cases we are not to yield our own opinion or mode of action, if they seem right to us, but to maintain them in charity, waiting for that fuller revelation [from God Himself] which shall declare us right and others wrong, or the reverse" (50).

V. 16: "Nevertheless, to what we have attained, in that same sphere [we are] to live"

Paul instructs his reader about another urgent concern: there must be no deviation "from those principles that have brought us safely to our present stage of Christian maturity. . . The condition for future enlightenment is to walk according to present light" (Mounce, 772). That is, "whatever else they do, their ef-

fort and progress must be along the path which already has led them from sin to God” (Beet, 102). Thus, “our present attainments [must] be the rule of our conduct” (Pidge, 50).

Even though God may give additional or further enlightenment, “the present duty is to walk in the light of that unto which the believers have already come. We have to move forward in the same line, one of mind, true to what we have already attained” (Muller, 127). As Lightfoot so uniquely puts it: “Our footsteps must not swerve from the line in which we have hitherto trodden” (152).

This is “a needed lesson for Christians weary with the monotony of routine in religious life and work” (Robertson, 456).

Indeed, another of the *Standard Alternatives to Pursue*.

V. 17: “Be among those who join in following me, brothers, and pay close attention to those who practice living by the pattern we set before you”

The word translated “those who join in following” (*summimetai*) occurs only here in the NT. It “denotes a fellow-imitator” (Vine, 589) or “an imitator with others” (Thayer, 596) or “be united in following.”

The object of this ‘following’ is “me.” Paul has already noted the fact that he has not attained spiritual perfection or that he brought about his own righteousness. So, how can he set himself up as one worth following? Precisely because “he is struggling in the same race that they are running” (Silva, 207). Any sense of arrogance or boasting on his part is offset by the affectionate term “brothers.” Furthermore, he rather quickly modifies his statement, lest any misunderstanding might arise. It is not only himself but also “we” who set the appropriate behavioral “pattern” or “example” (*tupon*) before them. The “we” likely embraces Timothy (2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30), and may include others who were known by Paul and his Philippian readers.

The imperative “pay close attention to” (*skopeite*) represents his “continued emphasis on the concentration and singleness of purpose that are required” (Silva, 208) of those who are working out their own salvation (2:12). This involves, of course, not only a positive pattern to pursue but also a negative one to avoid, such as that provided by “the dogs, evil workers, and mutilators” (1:2) and those he will mention in the next two verses.

V. 18: “For many, of whom I have told you repeatedly and tell you even now with tears, practice living as the enemies of the cross of Christ”

The reason why Paul is so concerned to call forth from his readers the necessity for this pattern of vigilance and concentration and singleness of purpose is now isolated or pinpointed. He is “deeply concerned about the pernicious influence of the many who behave in a way that is diametrically opposed to this pattern and by their behaviour live as enemies of the cross of Christ” (O’Brien, 450). Paul notes that there are “many” of these enemies.

In his former visit at Philippi, and perhaps through other writings which we do not possess, he had warned about these enemies “repeatedly (*pollakis*).” As he now resumes the previous warnings, he is moved to “tears” (*klaion*). This term denotes great sorrow, grief, pain, and distress. It is “an expression of any feeling of sadness, care, or anxiety” (BAG, 434). [Paul uses this word only two other times: Rom 12:15; 1 Cor. 7:30.]

The article “the” (*tous*) before the word “enemies” (*echthrous*) “marks the class [of people] which they represent” (Vincent, 117). Meyer claims they are “hostile to the fellowship of the cross of Christ (iii. 10) . . . even Christians whose conduct is the deterrent contrast to that which is represented in ver. 17” (147). Scott suggests that he likely “speaks in a general way of professing Christians who had disgraced the name” (97). This would account for Paul’s “tears” which he would not likely have shed if he were referring to non-Christians. Knight supports this position and notes that “it is in the spirit of weeping and not harsh censoriousness that one must view inconsistencies in others” (344). If they were, indeed, Christians they were clearly not manifesting the fact of being crucified with Christ and thus dead to sin and selfishness – the opposite of the spirit of humility which runs through this letter. Calvin, however, calls them “hypocritical *enemies of the gospel*.” That it, those so-called Jewish Christians or Judaizers who claimed to believe in Jesus but whose legalistic mindset actually nullified the justifying effects of the cross. Indeed, as Lenski points out:

the worst enemies of ‘the cross’ are not those who object to a crucified Savior but those who deny that the cross and the sacrifice of Christ alone justify and save the sinner. These Judaizers made Jesus himself a Judaizer. Had Jesus not been circumcised; had he not kept the Mosaic law; had he not died on the cross for that; must we not follow this example of his to be saved? So they probably argued. (858-859)

The declarations in v. 19 lean in this direction of interpretation.

V. 19: “whose end is doom/destruction, whose god is their bodily desires, and whose glory is in their shame, who think highly

of earthly things”

The beliefs of these Judaizers made Jesus simply another noble or not so noble martyr. Paul’s characterization of them in this verse is shattering. They are described in four ways: (1) The word “doom” (*apoleia*) refers to their “everlasting ruin” (Lenski, 859), destruction, destined for hell. Stagg states it refers to “their final judgment; but their quality of existence is already one of ruin” (210).

(2) The word “bodily desires” (*koilia*) is translated “belly” (KJV and Beck), “appetite” (NASB), “stomach” (Williams) is a figure of speech which speaks of “their lower and lowest nature” (Lenski, 859). Scott states that “we have here a terrible description of what is the real religion of many men. They conceive of no higher good than the satisfaction of their bodily appetites” (99-100) – “gluttony, drunkenness, or preoccupation with the physical or material” (Stagg, 210).

(3) Furthermore, “their glory is in their shame” –not the Savior. Again, “God’s glory” is the primary theme of this letter (1:11; 2:11; here in v. 19 and 21; 4:19, 20. They stood in direct opposition to God’s glory and elevated their own.

The word “shame” (*aischune*) is used by Paul only one other time: 2 Cor. 4:2. [It occurs elsewhere in the NT: Lk. 14:9; Heb. 12:2; Jude 13; Rev. 3:18.] Bengel (444) thinks the primary meaning is that of “*the concision*, that the *circumcision* now was not *glorious*, but *shameful*.” Muller agrees: “They boast of their circumcision, they associate their glory with their circumcised flesh, ignoring the spiritual bearing which it has on Christ and His cross” (131). Cp. Gal. 6:13.

(4) “they think highly of earthly things” – That is, it is “the direction of their thoughts towards earthly things, worldly-mindedness, a life ordered according to worldly measures, in by-passing the cross of Christ and turning their back on the righteousness which is from God through faith” (Muller, 131-132).

“No error is so fatal as to look only to material good. When this is the one aim, a man’s whole nature is gradually debased until he is himself nothing but an earthly clod, like the things he honors” (Scott, 100).

V. 20: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we are eagerly awaiting our Savior, [the] Lord Jesus Christ”

The word “citizenship” (*politeuma*) occurs here only in the NT. It “signifies the condition, or life, of a citizen; it is said of the heavenly status of believers” (Vine, 195). Thayer conveys the idea of “commonwealth” (693). Moulton and Milligan suggest “community” (525). This heavenly citizenship is designed

to create within them the understanding “that the fallen earthly realm is not the sum of their existence. The goal of their existence will instead be reached on the day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns (v. 20b)” (Thielman, 199-200).

In the words of Augustine, “with the body we walk on earth, with the heart we dwell in heaven.” As Robertson pictures Paul’s picture, this “eagerness for the second coming of Christ [is] the normal attitude of the Christian colonist whose home is heaven” (457).

V. 21: “who will transform the appearance of our humble body into the likeness of His glorious body by the energy of the power He has to submit all things to Himself”

The word “transform” (*metaschematisei*) occurs only here in Philippians and only four other places in the NT: 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Cor. 11:13, 14, 15. It means “to change the appearance,” and in this case, it involves the human body as it presently exists. It will be like the body of the exalted Christ which cannot be adequately comprehended (cp. 1 Jn. 3:2). Nevertheless, “its new outward appearance, according to the usage of *summorphon* (**fashioned** or conformed) will be appropriate to its inner spiritual character” (Knight, 345). Christians “will enter on a new state of being, and their bodies will be similar to that of the exalted Christ, and will manifest that higher life on which they have now entered” (Scott, 103).

Indeed, Paul looks forward to Christ’s return in which “the complete transformation of the body and the moral life associated with it [takes place], but the same power which will accomplish this is available for moral transformation now” (Brooks, 33).

4:1: “Therefore, my unforgettable brothers whom I long to see, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, unforgettable ones”

The word “unforgettable” (*agapetoi*) is usually translated “beloved; those who are the objects of God’s love,” or “dearly loved” (Williams). My preference, “unforgettable” is a unique way to capture the essence of its meaning.

The word translated “whom I long to see” (*epipothetoi*) occurs only here in the NT. It “indicates the special fellowship which exists between Paul and the Philippians” (Knight, 346). This speaks of “his affection for them and his attachment to them” (Muller, 136).

The word “joy” (*chara*) occurs here for the fifth (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29) and final time in this letter. As noted on p. 2, this is the second

theme of this letter.

The word “crown” (*stephanos*) “refers to that which was given to the victor in an athletic contest” (Brooks, 33). It indicates that the Philippians themselves “are his chaplet of victory, showing that he has not run in vain” (Vincent, 454); “an emblem of life, joy, reward and glory” (Vine, 260).

Robbins points out the Philippians “were a source of true gladness; and they were the badge and proof of his service. They were the witnesses to his triumphant ministry” (119).

The imperative “stand firm” (*stekete*) is “a military expression as a soldier in the midst of battle. Regarding their love and labor the Philippians must ever be advancing. As to faith and fidelity, they must **stand** immovable” (Knight, 346). The stand is “in the Lord” – the sixth occurrence of this phrase in Philippians. “Let no errorists move you in the slightest degree. It is the one thing we all need. Some even drift of their own accord; some are swayed by every new wind of doctrine. The Lord help us to stand!” (Lenski, 865).

He closes this section of scripture on standard alternatives to pursue with the same affectionate term used earlier (2:12) in this letter, and twice in this single verse: *agapetoi* (“unforgettable ones”).

g. Specific Appeals to Unity (4:2-3)

V. 2: “I encourage Euodia and I encourage Syntyche to think in an agreeable manner in the Lord”

Euodia (“sweet savor or fragrance”) and Syntyche (“good luck or fortunate”) are noted in v. 3 in very favorable terms. “It may have been the women’s energy and activity which occasioned some friction. They had not managed the disagreement wisely. They had allowed the disagreement to deepen into dislike and distrust, and the estrangement had affected the fellowship of the church” (Robbins, 121).

The potential touchiness of the tension between these two women motivates Paul to use the verb “I encourage” before both of them, as if to communicate the need for equality in evaporating the rift between them. This verb *phronein* means “to have one’s mind controlled by; to live in harmony of mind; to agree with one another; concern for, care about.” J. B. Phillips translates, “to make up your differences.”

It is imperative to recall the frequency of the recurring phrase, “in the Lord” – the seventh occurrence of this phrase (1:14; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1; 4:1). The differences between these two women is not to be settled simply on the grounds of human decency – though that

should not be excluded. The primary motive and basis for resolving the tension finds its source in their mutually accepted positions as fellow believers and receivers of the Lord's same extended love, grace, and mercy to both of them. They are called upon to adopt the attitude noted in 2:1-4. "They should be in Spirit-produced fellowship with one another, and this relationship should be characterized by 'tenderness and compassion,' a mutual love, and a unity of purpose. In should, in addition, lead them to put the interests of of the other before their own interests" (Thielman, 217).

V. 3: "Yes, I also ask you, genuine fellow-worker, assist them, who struggled together with me in the gospel and with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life"

The word "fellow-worker" (*suzuge*) has been regarded as a proper name by Lenski (868), Chrosostom, Meyer, Pidge (54), Muller (138), Scott (108), and/or a term for any authentic members in the church (Silva, 222) who could help resolve the friction between them. Barclay (74) suggests it is Epaphroditus, "the bearer of the letter, and that Paul is entrusting him not only with the letter, but also with the task of making peace at Philippi."

Regardless of the conclusion one may reach in this mystery of identity matter, the word itself reflects someone with conciliatory skills. And, as Robertson acknowledges, "after all it matters little that we do not know who the peacemaker was" (458).

Nevertheless, the task before this unidentified person is of superlative significance for Euodia ("sweet savor or fragrance") and Syntche ("good luck or fortunate"), as well as for the well-being of the whole church: "assist them." The reason for Paul's rather urgent call for assistance is without dispute: they have been faithful partners of Paul, Clement, and other of Paul's fellow-workers in the gospel mission.

The identity of Clement and the others is also as vague as that of *suzuge*. This identity matter is not a rabbit which will be chased in this commentary. There are many others which do so.

Regardless of identity settlement, one thing that is settled is stated in the last phrase of this verse: "whose names are in the book of life." Even though their names are not known on earth now, they are already known now in heaven.

This phrase "the book of life" occurs often in the Revelation: 3:5 in reference to believers who are conquerors; 13:8 who do not worship the beast; 17:8 who have been predestined from the foundation of the world; 20:15 who will enter the presence of God at the end. That names are written in heaven is also noted in Lk. 10:20 and Heb. 12:23. Suffice is to say that "the possession

of eternal life is the heritage of every believer” (O’Brien, 483).
“God knows his own for time and eternity” (Robbins, 122).

h. Several Admonitions to Practice (4:4-9)

V. 4: “Keep on rejoicing in the Lord always; again, I shall say keep on rejoicing.”

The word “keep on rejoicing” is a present tense imperative and calls for a continuous, ongoing attitude of gratitude. As seen on page 2, this is another theme of this letter: “rejoice” (1:18; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 10); “Joy” (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1).

Neither Paul’s difficult circumstances nor the frightening dangers faced by the Philippians can be allowed to eclipse Christian joy as the mark of faith. Clearly Paul does not have in view such superficial happiness as manifests itself only when things go well. Not, it is rejoicing that can be had *pantote* (“always”), because it depends not on changing circumstances but on the One who does not change: ‘Rejoice *in the Lord*.’ (224).

This is the eighth occurrence (1:14; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 2) of the phrase “in the Lord” – that is, in the sphere of His presence and peace.

V. 5: “Let your for kindness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.”

The word “kindness” (*epieikes*) occurs only four other times in the NT: 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 3:2; Jam. 3:17; 1 Pt. 2:18. It denotes “moderation” (KJV), “forbearance” (RSV), “forbearing spirit” (NASB, Williams), “gentle” (Beck), “sweet reasonableness (Matthew Arnold).

Bengel indicates that “joy in the Lord produces true *kindliness* to our neighbor, and proper concern about one’s own affairs” (447). Knight adds: “restraint of passions, soberness, or that which is suitable. It may mean a good disposition toward other men and disinclined to fight. . . . not insisting on one’s rights, but acting with consideration for one another” (347). Silva indicates that this word means “to be guided by a frame of mind that does not put priority on personal rights . . . preferring others above themselves” (224).

To say that “the Lord is near” means that His “approaching return should awaken us to follow His example” (Silva, 224). Lightfoot paraphrases it this way: “To what purpose is this

rivalry, this self-assertion? The end is nigh, when you will have to resign all. Bear with others now, that God may bear with you then” (196).

V. 6: “Stop being worried about anything, but in everything in prayer and in petition with thanksgiving keep on making known your requests to God”

“Stop being worried” (*merimnate*) is the first of two present tense imperatives in this verse. This one is an imperative of prohibition: stop being anxious! This is not advice to avoid planning. As Muller notes, “to care is a virtue, but to foster cares is sin, for such anxiety is not trust in God, but a trusting in oneself, which comes to inward suffering, fears and worry” (141).

To puncture worry or anxiety with prayer is the proper pathway which Paul portrays before his Philippian friends. The word “prayer” (*proseuche*) is “a general word conveying the ideas of adoration, devotion, and worship. It does not refer to petitions but to the mood of the petitioner . . . a frame of mind or attitude” (Robbins, 128).

The word “petition” (*deesei*) is translated “supplication” (KJV), “entreaty” (Twentieth Century NT), “earnest pleading” (Weymouth). This term is a “petition for necessities, sharing of needs and problems with God” (Robbins, 128).

The word “thanksgiving” (*eucharistias*) “is the background, the predominant tone of the Christian life. To pray in any other spirit is to clip the wings of prayer” (Kennedy, 467). When prayer ascends without thanksgiving, it descends without touching the heart of God.

“Keep on making known” (*gnorizestho*) is the second of the two present tense imperatives in this verse. This one is an imperative of continuity. Although God already knows what we need, for some vague reason, He desires an ongoing process of making them known to Him in prayerful thanksgiving. Perhaps, it is simply a want to keep His people in a state of conscious awareness of and joyful dependence upon His presence.

V. 7: “and the peace of God which exceeds all our thinking shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”

Such conscious awareness of and joyful dependence upon His presence yields “the peace of trust, the repose of a believing heart, which Christ so beautifully describes in John 14:27, and which presupposes the peace of reconciliation as its foundation” (Pidge, 56). No matter how intelligent or brilliant one may be,

there is no human mind which can adequately comprehend or digest this “peace of God.” It exceeds a human’s ability to even express in words. “Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing Our great Redeemer’s praise” would still be insufficient to adequately capture and convey.

This astounding peace “is far beyond our fondest hopes and dreams, but it stands as a sentinel to guard [the hearts and minds of] those who are in Christ Jesus” (Erdman, 141).

Such peace, nevertheless, “is enjoyed while at war with evil” (Stagg, 213).

V. 8: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honest, whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, if any virtue, if any praise, think on these things”

As indicated by the last verb in this verse, *logizesthe* is a present imperative which calls for thoughts or thinking patterns which are characterized by the terms in this verse. “We are responsible for our thoughts and can hold them to high and holy ideals” (Robertson, 460) or principles which are to control our mental states: “Whatever” is -

1. “true” (*alethe*) – facts, not fictions. This refers to truthfulness in all aspects of life. Truthfulness will prevent having to worry or be overly concerned about error/s. This will prevent people from letting themselves down, as well as others.

2. “honest” (*semna*) – This depicts what is worthy or reverence; what is noble, respectful, and honorable. This mindset sets the stage for worship and holding God and others in high respect. This word occurs in the NT only here and 1 Tim. 3:8, 11; Tit. 2:2. It also calls for self-respect, since the Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It indicates being serious and dignified, not only knowing what is right but actually doing it. It prohibits being attracted to things which, in light of eternity, are not significant or meaningful.

3. “righteous” (*dikaia*) – This refers to living life in conjunction with godly or divine standards and guidelines. It desires and delivers one’s responsibilities to God and others (business, family, church, etc.). Pleasure and personal comforts are not in the lineup for one with this thinking pattern. It is duty-oriented.

4. “pure” (*hagna*) – This word means being chaste and clean in all facets of one’s life. It involves being moral or ethical and having thoughts which even God can accept. Its look is upward and hopeful rather than downward and pessimistic. It strives to be free from impurities of motives and actions. It

depicts thoughts which are free from sinful stains and/or defilements.

5. “lovely” (*prosphile*) – This word occurs only here in the NT. It denotes being lovable, pleasing, and pleasant to be with. It calls forth love from others and appropriate degrees of love to others. “There are those whose minds are so set on vengeance and punishment that they call forth bitterness and fear in others. There are those whose minds are so set on criticism and rebuke that they call forth resentment in others. The mind of the Christian is set on the lovely things – kindness, sympathy, forbearance – so he is a winsome person, whom to see is to love” (Barclay, 80).

6. “good report” (*euphema*) – This word occurs only here in the NT.

It refers to having a good reputation, being fair-minded, looking for the good in others, building others up instead of tearing them down. It avoids vulgarity. It looks for what is beautiful.

7. “virtue” (*arete*) – This word occurs in the NT only here and 1 Pt. 2:9; 2 Pt. 1:3, 5. It describes goodness and moral excellence. It indicates every effort to be redemptive in one’s dealings with others.

8. “praise” (*epainos*) – This word means that one is worth being recommended or approved by others. It also applies to God Himself and His praiseworthiness. Romans 13: 7 indicates that some men are to be praised or held in high honor due to their positions in life. Barclay notes, however, that “the Christian will live in such a way that he will neither conceitedly desire nor foolishly despise the praise of men” (81).

Paul is encouraging the Philippians to let these thought patterns “govern” their lives (Pidge, 57). Successful sanctification or the working out of one’s salvation with fear and trembling (2:12) is greatly determined by how well these thoughts patterns are adopted or appropriated. These thought patterns will translate into meaningful and fruitful courses of actions in daily living.

V. 9: “Keep on practicing the things you learned and received and heard and saw in me; and the God of peace shall be with you.”

The verb “keep on practicing” (*prassete*) is another present tense imperative which calls for consistent, ongoing choices – things to *do*, not simply “ponder” (Pidge, 57). Those “things” are now identified:

“learned” – and are personally and collectively appropriating what Paul has taught them.

“received” - and are treasuring with gratitude and mutual cooperation. In other words, “the *believing* acceptance of the gospel

tradition [and truth]" (O'Brien, 510).

"heard" - This could refer to the many informal times he met and preached or shared significant truths about the Christian faith and its impact on daily conduct. It may also refer to his "character and demeanour, how he faced his trials, and so on" (Ibid.).

"saw" – They saw in Paul the fleshing out of the truths which he preached and taught.

The words "in me" are added to demonstrate that all of these features had been crystallized in Paul himself. There were no elements of conflict in any of them.

Also, the last phrase is loaded with light: "It is not only the peace of God but the God of peace Himself who will overshadow us with His care" (Silva, 230).

The words of the hymn square with these truths: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

These Several Admonitions to Practice (4:4-9) are clearly more than simple suggestions. They have serious consequences if ignored.

B. Acknowledgment of the Gift (4:10-19)

V. 10: "Now I have rejoiced greatly in [the] Lord that now at last you have revived your thoughts of me, even your interests in which you had been thinking but were without opportunity to act on them."

The word "rejoiced" (*echaren*) occurs here for the seventh (1:18; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4) and final time in this letter.

The adverb "greatly" (*megalos*) occurs here only in the NT and is designed to highlight the magnitude of his gratitude for their generosity.

The phrase "in the Lord" occurs here for the ninth (1:14; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 2, 4) and final time in Philippians.

The word "revived" (*anethalete*) occurs here only in the NT. It means "to flourish anew (*ana*, again, anew, *thallo*, to flourish or blossom)" (Vine, 976).

Thayer adds, "*to shoot up, sprout again*" (37). Vincent: "*ye caused your thinking on my behalf to bloom anew*" (459). Mounce suggests the word may indicate "recovery from a period of dire poverty" (776).

The words "now at last" (*hede pote*) indicate that "the Philippians' gift had been expected by him; with what feelings, see ver. 11, 17, *now*, not too late – *at last*, not too soon. The time was *suitable*" (Bengel, 448-449).

The following phrase indicates what their thoughts of Paul were: "even your interests in which you had been thinking but were without opportunity to act on them." The word "without opportunity" (*ekaieisthe*) occurs here only in the NT. It may indicate that "no one was available for the trip" (Mounce, 776).

That is, they “lacked the means” (Scott, 122) or did not “have a chance” (Robertson, 461).

V. 11: “Not that I am speaking from need, for I have learned to be satisfied in whatever circumstances I am in”

In order to quickly remove any false ideas that he is grumbling or complaining about any want or need, he supplies this clarification.

One of the common teachings by the Stoic philosophers during this time was “that a man’s real life was in his own soul, and that he must not depend on outward accidents but should be ‘sufficient to himself’” (Scott, 122).

Paul adopts and spiritually sanctifies this idea in terms of mental-emotional and behavioral realities. In fact, the word he here uses for “satisfied” (*autarkes*) occurs nowhere else in the NT and indicates he is “content” (Vine, 236; BAG, 122), regardless of the circumstances or situations in which he finds himself.

This was something which Paul “learned” (*emathon*). If it is true that “life itself is life’s best teacher,” then Paul here affirms that principle. He has learned that God was always in his midst as sustainer and ultimately the deliverer either through or from the circumstances of his life: 2 Cor. 11:23-30; 12:10. After all, “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Co. 5:7).

V. 12: “I know how to live in humble circumstances and I know how to live in prosperity; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of how to be filled and to hunger, to be overflowing and to be in poverty”

The verb “learned the secret of” (*memuemai*) occurs here only in the NT. It means “to be initiated. He had been initiated into Christ’s secret about living triumphantly above changing circumstances (cf. Matt. 11:28-30)” (Stagg, 215). Indeed, “despite his circumstances, Paul had been **initiated** into the secret of facing both lack and abundance” (Mounce, 776).

Paul was neither an ascetic who despised the material things of life nor a materialist who lived for such values. He could enjoy the physical and material things when they come to him. He could get along without them when deprived of them. He sought neither poverty nor wealth. Drawing upon inner resources which were his in Christ, he found meaning and fulfillment as his outward circumstances changed from day to day. (Stagg, 215-216)

V. 13: “I have strength for all things in the one who enables me”

Moule’s perspective on this verse is most arresting: “not all things absolutely but with all things he has to do, as the will of God brings them to him; not the boundless field of possibilities, but a straight line across it, the actual path of duty and suffering, chosen not by himself but by his Lord and Master (118).

The one who “**infused** strength in him” (Mounce, 776) for this triumphant manner of living life’s multiple mix of ups and downs, ins and outs, pluses and minuses, is Christ Himself. The word “enables” (*endunamounti*) is a present tense participle which indicates an ongoing “ability” to endure and press forward under His guardianship and guidance.

V. 14: “Nevertheless, you did well in helping in my affliction”

The word here translated “well” (*kalos*) means “rightly, correctly.” The word “affliction” (*thlipsei*) indicates various sorts of “pressure; to be troubled, antagonism, anything which burdens the spirit” (Vine, 40-41). So, the “helping” (*sugkoinonesantes*) refers to their ‘taking part’ in the troubles he experienced. This verb is composed of two other words: *suv* (“with, together with”) and *koinoneo* (“sharing, participation, fellowship”). [This verb occurs only two other times in the NT: Ep. 5:11; Re. 18:4. The noun form (*sugkoinonos*) of this verb occurs: Ro. 11:17; 1 Co. 9:23; Ph. 1:7; Re. 1:9.] So, the word basically means “to share with someone in something” and here denotes “the sharing of active assistance in his affliction” (Hauck, 804, 807). He specifies that assistance in v. 15.

V. 15: “And you yourselves know, Philippians, that at [my] first sharing of the gospel [with you], when I left Macedonia, no other church partnered with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone”

The translation, “first sharing” (*arche tou euaggeliou*) is translated “‘the beginning of the gospel’ (KJV) and refers to when it was first proclaimed in Macedonia.

One of the unique things about the church in Philippi in relation to Paul was that they were the only church which entered into partnership (*ekoinonesen*) with him in terms of financial assistance. Indeed, the words “giving and receiving” indicate “financial transactions” (Mounce, 776). The noun “receiving” (*lampsis*) occurs here only in the NT.

V. 16: “Because even in Thessalonica you sent once and twice for my needs”

On Paul’s first visit to Philippi, he had sailed from there to the seaport city of Thessalonica. Although the book of Acts provides no information in this regard, he had apparently encountered some type of trouble or difficulty. Upon learning of this, the Philippian Christians “had come to his rescue more than once” (Scott, 126). So, he here acknowledges his gratitude in this regard. In a somewhat ‘humorous’ perhaps, yet realistic way, Mounce notes that “almost before he was out of sight they had more than once sent him help”(776).

V. 17: “Not that I am seeking the gift itself, but I am seeking the fruitful outcome which is increasing to your account”

The word “fruit, fruitful outcome” (*ton karpon*) “was a word commonly applied to the increment produced by money” (Scott, 126). The Amplified NT, therefore, translates: “but I seek and am eager for the fruit which increases to your credit – the harvest of blessing that is accumulating to your account.” The following translations capture various aspects of the meaning of this verse: “It is not money I am anxious for, what I am anxious for is the interest that accumulates in this way to your divine credit” (Moffatt) “but I seek fruit which accrues therefrom to your account” (Conybeare) “but I am anxious to see the abundant return that will be placed to your account” (Twentieth Century NT) “I set store by the rich increase that stands to your credit” (Knox)

V. 18: “And I have all things and am filled; I have been filled by having received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a sweet-smelling offering, a welcome sacrifice, well-pleasing to God”

With two present tense verbs, Paul says “I have and am filled” in relation to “all things” necessary for his satisfaction or contentment in life. That is, he did not need and was not asking for more help from them. He then switches to a perfect tense verb which denotes a permanent condition or state of being (“have been filled and still am”) that is connected with “the things” brought from them to him by Epaphroditus.

In fact, he wanted to assure this church that he knew they had rendered service to him, but that he knew they had done so because he was a servant of God. He, therefore, uses the language of sacrifice and notes that their service to him was actually “an offering pleasing to God (cf. Gen. 8:21)” (Mounce, 776). The words “sweet-smelling or fragrant offering” (*osmen euodias*)¹¹, “welcome sacrifice” (*thusian dekten*)¹², and “well-pleasing to God” (*euareston to theo*)¹³ convey a beautiful scene and sense of worship.

V. 19: “And my God shall fully supply all you need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus”

Paul’s life was *theocentric* (“God-centered”) and he here attributes to the One Who alone embodies all sufficiency as the One to meet their needs just as they had met his, as a servant of God. To say that He acts and shall act “according to His riches in glory” means that He will do so “on a scale commensurate with his wealth” (Mounce, 777) – which, of course, is limitless. By adding the words, “in Christ Jesus,” Paul, again, assures them that God acts “in union with the One Who mediates God’s blessings to man” (Ibid). Again, “God’s glory” is the primary theme of this letter: 1:11; 2:11; 3:19, 21; here, and v. 20.

¹¹ Cp. Jn. 12:3; 12 Co. 2:14, 16; Ep. 5:2.

¹² Cp. Lk. 4:19, 24; Ac. 10:35; 2 Co. 6:2 for the word “acceptable.”

¹³ Cp. Ro. 12:1-2; 14:18; 2 Co. 5:9; Ep. 5:10; Col. 3:20; Tit. 2:9; Heb. 13:21 for the word “well-pleasing.”

IV Special Intimations from Paul for the Philippians (4:20-23)

A. Adoration of God (4:20)

V. 20: “Now to our God¹⁴ and Father¹⁵ the glory forever and ever, Amen.”

It was, obviously, Paul’s thought of God’s Fatherly Care which gave rise to or called forth this closing doxology (“word of glory”) without end. These words focus “the readers’ attention on the primary goal both of Paul’s apostolic vocation and of the Philippians’ participation in it: God’s glory” (Thielman, 238).

Again, and finally, “God’s glory” is the primary theme of this letter: 1:11; 2:11; 3:19, 21; 4:19, here.

B. Arrangement of Greetings (4:21-22)

V. 21: “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.”

These concluding greets are rather short in words but include “every saint” in scope. That is, each individual Christian in the church is to receive this greeting personally. Although he names no one he includes everyone. The word “saint” (*hagion*) denotes all those who have been ‘set apart’ by God and for God into His family. All of his readers find their sphere of connection with God and with one another “in Christ Jesus.” There are no saints apart from union with Him.

“The brothers” who are here with Paul send their greetings, but other than Timothy (1:1) they are also not named.

V. 22: “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.”

The words “all the saints” who send their greetings are also unknown. Even those “of Caesar’s household” are not named. Knight (353) notes that Caesar’s household “was a general term for those employed in various types of government service and reference may be to the men who guarded Paul – some of whom perhaps he had introduced to Christ” – including slaves!

C. Avowal of Grace (4:23)

V. 23: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit.”

This letter began with “grace” (1:2) and now closes with “grace” which cannot be experienced apart from “the Lord Jesus Christ.”

¹⁴ This is the twenty third and final mention of the name of God in this letter: 1:2, 3, 8, 11, 28; 2:6 (twice), 9, 11, 13, 15, 27; 3:3, 9, 14, 15, 19; 4:6, 7, 9, 18, 19, 20.

¹⁵ The word “Father” first appears in 1:2; 2:11, 22; and now closes with it.

“It may be in deliberate support of his overriding concern for unity that he prays for Christ’s *grace* to be with their *spirit*. *Your* is plural but *spirit* is singular. They are to be united in one spirit” (Stagg, 216). It is as if Paul “knows that when they listen to him, they will be gathered in a single company, all of them sharing in the one Spirit” (Scott, 129). “This grace alone could create the fellowship which is shared so tenderly by Paul and his beloved Philippians” (Knight, 353).
After all, it is all to and for **God’s glory!**

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